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**ADVANCED STUDY IN THE  
HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA  
VOLUME II  
(1813-1919)**



**ADVANCED STUDY IN THE  
HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA  
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(1813-1919)**

**G.S. CHHABRA**



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***Advanced Study in the History of Modern India***  
***Volume II (1813-1919)***

1971 , G.S. Chhabra

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## ***PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION***

I am grateful to my Publisher, Shri O.P. Ghai, for the diligence, steadfastness and hard work that he has brought to bear on this volume by way of its editing and improvement in the quality of production. The matter itself was completely revised by the author and a large number of entirely new additions made before it was handed over for publication. Effort has been made to incorporate all the new researches and discoveries made by the scholars of this period of the Indian history since first edition of this work went into print. The author trusts the readers will find the volume well worth their confidence and trust, so far as the authenticity of facts is concerned, though conclusions, wherever drawn, belong solely to him and might represent his own sense of judgement and grasp, for better or worse.

G.S. Chhabra



## ***PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION***

What the stupidity of the wire-pullers in England did not permit Wellesley to accomplish, Marquess of Hastings, with whose period of Governor-Generalship this volume starts, did when he brought the British dominion to extend from Cape Comorin to the banks of the Sutlej. A new order dawned in India, when the British established themselves under the latter Governor-General as an imperial authority, now concerned not so much with further territorial expansion, as with the administrative and political consolidation of what they already had acquired. Lord William Bentinck and Lord Dalhousie made a significant contribution towards that direction, so that the British peace ran through the veins of the country and its awe made it to touch the bottom of its political subservience from where reaction came in the shape of the mighty upsurge of 1857 and the cycle now moved upwards in the form of the Indian Nationalist Movement, to which the conservative Governor-Generals like Lords Lytton and Curzon gave an impetus by their policies that only sharpened opposition and protest. Foundation of the Indian National Congress, the Nationalist movement and the Constitutional reforms till 1920 when Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene, gave a new shape to the Indian political upheaval. All this has been discussed in this volume, drawing again on all the primary and secondary published works to which one may have access.

G.S. Chhabra

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# 1

## Marquess of Hastings 1813-1823

### THE CHARTER ACT, 1813 AND WAR WITH THE INDIAN STATES

Francis Rawdon Hastings, afterwards Marquess of Hastings, was born on 9 December 1754. His period of administration, according to Sir W.W. Hunter, forms an era in Indian history, during which "Great Britain finally assumed undivided responsibility for, and supreme control over the Empire of Continental India." He was the eldest son of John Lord Rawdon by his third wife, Lady Elizabeth Hastings (eldest daughter of Theophilus, ninth Earl of Huntingdon), who, upon the death of her brother, the tenth Earl, in 1789, succeeded to many of the honours and to all the estates of the Hastings family; these she transmitted to her son Francis, who assumed his mother's surname in addition to his own, and thus united in his own person the representation and the traditions of two illustrious families."<sup>1</sup>

Francis Rawdon was only seven years old when, in 1761, he became known by the courtesy title, of Lord Rawdon. He was educated at Harrow, was gazetted ensign in the 15th Foot in 1771 when he was seventeen, and matriculated shortly after this at the University College Oxford. After he finished his usual continental tour, he was promoted to a lieutenancy in the 5th Foot in 1773, and he embarked immediately for America to take part against the War of Independence, where he rose to higher positions. On his return from America, he found himself having been returned in his absence a member for Randals-town Co. Antrim, to the Irish House of Commons. He was raised to the peerage of Great Britain in 1783, and though he took little part in politics, he got himself attached to

1. Bladensburg, Major Ross, *The Marquess of Hastings*, ed. Sir W.W. Hunter, pp.1-42.

the Prince of Wales and to his cause, from whom he drew a great advantage. On the death of his father in June 1793 he succeeded as second Earl of Moira in the peerage of Ireland, and the next year he was promoted Major-General. Lord Moira was married in 1804 to Flora, Countess of London, by whom he had six children. His mother died in 1808, bequeathing to him her titles and honours. In 1812 he was installed knight of the Garter, and on the resignation of Lord Minto, he was appointed as the Governor-General of Bengal, with which office he was also to combine that of the Commander-in-Chief. "He sailed from Portsmouth on 14 April 1813 and landed at Calcutta on the 4 October, when he at once assumed his new functions."<sup>1</sup>

### The Charter Act 1813

Almost simultaneously with the arrival of Lord Hastings in India, the British Parliament passed the Charter Act of 1813, which was more important than that of 1793 in several respects, particularly for the reason that the Company received a fatal blow to its trade monopoly in India. Besides, it made certain provisions for the welfare of the Indian people.

The spirit of this Act influenced the working of the British in India during the time of Hastings, and his successors. Therefore, before we examine the conditions in India and the problems Hastings had to grapple with, it may not be out of place to examine the circumstances, provisions and significance of this Act.

The first decade of the 19th century was a crucial period in the history of Europe. A major part of the continent passed under the imperial control of Napoleon, who in his determination to starve the nation of shopkeepers, as he called the British, and bring them to submission, closed all the ports of Europe to the English merchandise. The British trade thus was put under severe strains and the English merchants began to look for new markets outside Europe to make up for this loss. It was just then that the Bill of 1813 was brought in the Parliament. The private merchants thus given an opportunity, attacked the Company's trade monopoly and claimed freedom to trade with India. The circumstances compelled the British rule to regard their powers in India "after 1800 as no more than an accessory, an instrument for ensuring the necessary conditions of law and order by which the potentially vast Indian market could be conquered for the British industry."<sup>2</sup>

The famous *laissez-faire* theory of Adam Smith also was fast gaining popularity in the economic minds of the country. This theory

1. *ibid.*

2. Eric. T. Strokes, *The English Utilitarian in India*, p. 13.

asserted that the economic development of a country could take place best if the State made no interference in the economic enterprises of its individuals. The monopoly in trading rights, in its view, was repugnant to the interests of a free nation, and therefore, the monopoly of the Company under these circumstances was not liked.

Nor could the continuing of the Company's aggressive wars in India be overlooked. There were indeed certain circumstances in India which had made these necessary. The fast declining power of the Mughals had created a vacuum which no power in India but the Company was able to fill up. And the whole of India being associated as one country, in the people's mind, if the Company occupied a part of it, the expansion of its control over the rest was thought to be a natural course. The Company thus developed its power, but the more it did so, the more was the antagonism against it in England. Its rising power was a sore point for many who were bound to insist on the dissolution of the Company or at least on the dissolution of its monopolies.

For these people it was a welcome opportunity when, as a result of the Company's policy of conquest and wars, its debts mounted and within five years, in 1805, they were almost doubled to stand at £ 21 million. The Directors were compelled to beg the Parliament for financial aid. A Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to look into the matter, which "did its work so well that its fifth report in 1812, is the standard authority on the judicial and police arrangements then in force and on land tenures," thus observes Keith.<sup>1</sup> These reports laid bare before the Parliament the weakness of the Company's system, thus compelling State intervention.

Then there were religious enthusiasts who under the leadership of Wilberforce, demanded active steps by the Company for the spread of Christianity in India. The Company was averse to this lest the religious prejudices of the people should be alarmed and thereby endanger the stability of the British dominions.

Thus the period of 20 years of the Charter of 1793 having almost come to a close, when the Directors applied in 1812 for their Charter to be renewed on the existing terms, their proposal was rejected by the Cabinet point-blank. As the matter came under discussion, numerous petitions were submitted against the monopolistic rights of the Company in trade. The private merchants of England and the manufacturing classes of the country claimed a share in the Company's economic activities, while the religious enthusiasts taking the opportunity desired a free hand for the propagation of their faith in the East. The inefficiency of the Company's government was vigorously criticised and wholesale reforms in administrative structure

1. Keith, *A Constitutional History of India*, p. 127.

were demanded. In a bid to defend its position, the Company argued that since the Indian revenues had never been sufficient for the proper running of the Indian Government, the commercial privileges of the Company could not be separated from its political and administrative activities. Moreover, the Company argued, if the Indian trade was thrown open to the Englishmen, large number of them would go and settle in India. Belonging to the ruling race, they would behave with an utter contempt towards the people for which, they being amenable only to the King's Courts in the presidency towns, it would be difficult to control and bring them to justice. In this connection the Company made requests to produce certain witnesses, which being granted, distinguished persons like Warren Hastings, Colonel Malcolm, Colonel Munroe, Charles Grant and Lord Teignmouth were brought forward to support the Company's views.

To the Company's first argument, however, its opponents replied that its defective organisation had long since robbed it of profits in its monopoly. And they further claimed that it was rather the Company's territorial revenues which bolstered up its trade, for it was asserted that the Company had always been making its investments with Indian revenues. To its second argument, the reply was a compromise whereby the Englishmen should be allowed to go to India, but under some severe restrictions.

The opponents of the Company claimed that if the Indian trade was thrown open, four advantages would accrue : (1) the other countries would be prevented from capturing the Indian trade, (2) the British industry and commerce would greatly flourish, (3) the cost of trade, i.e., warehouses and transport, would be greatly reduced, and (4) England would be able to get large imports of raw material from India.

It may be interesting to examine the situation in the Indian trade of the time, and see how far the arguments of the opponents of the Company's trading monopoly were valid. In fact the monopoly that the Company then enjoyed in the English laws, had long since ceased to exist, thanks to the corruption and illegal activities of its servants in India. These servants made huge amounts of illegal money in India, and since these had to be kept secret from their bosses, and otherwise also they could not easily be remitted home due to weight, risk of loss, etc., they advanced their money to the American, Portuguese, Swedish or other European merchants who visited the Indian ports. With this money, these merchants purchased Indian commodities and sailed back to the different European ports where these commodities would be sold at a profit, and out of the money they got, they would pay to the agents of the Englishmen or deposit in their bank accounts in London, the money they had been advanced. Thus, whatever, of the Company's monopoly existed, it was only against the private merchants of

England. The European merchants benefited not only at the cost of the private English merchants, but also at the cost of London. For if the Company's monopoly was abolished, the entire amount of commodities which the European merchants purchased in India, would rather be secured by the British merchants, and imported to London which would turn it into "the world depot for Asiatic Commerce." The foreign nations in these circumstances would either have to abandon this trade "or they would have been driven to import into India bullion or specie which would have increased the prosperity of the country."<sup>1</sup> No wonder, the trade monopoly of the company was severely attacked, and private British merchants wanted the freedom to trade with India.

Thus it was under these circumstances that the Bill for the renewal of the Company's Charter was brought in the Parliament and ultimately passed in 1813. The circumstances were to affect the Charter's provisions, as revealed in the following paragraphs.

*The Provisions of the Act.* In its essential provisions, the powers of the Board of Control to superintend, control and direct the Indian affairs were clearly defined and greatly enlarged. The Company's powers of patronage were reduced. The Court of Directors were to make appointments to the offices of the Governor-General, Commander-in-Chief, Governors, etc. subject to the approval of the Crown and their orders to this effect had to be counter-signed by the President of the Board of Control. A college opened in 1805 at Haillebury in Britain for the training of the civil servants of the Company, was to be controlled by the Board of Control. It was provided that no person could be taken as a writer until he had put in four terms in the college and had qualified for the job according to its rules. The military school at Adiscombe in Britain was also to be maintained and controlled by the Board, and the colleges at Calcutta and Madras were to be run under its regulations.

No changes were made in the Company's constitution, and the grant of its territorial acquisitions in India with the attended revenues, was extended for another twenty years. The Crown's sovereignty over the Company's territorial acquisitions was, however, expressly proclaimed. The most important provision was concerning trade. The Company's tea trade with China was reserved for it, but its trade monopoly with India was completely abolished, and the private merchants of England were permitted to develop free trading contacts with India with the exception that no private trading vessel would carry more than 400 tons of merchandise.

The British merchants and missionaries were given full freedom

1. See Roberts, P.E., *India Under Wellesley*, pp. 169-170.



to settle in India after securing licences for the purpose from the Directors or in case they refused, from the Board. This was done to avoid the dangers pointed out by the Company. The territories of India were considered as a property of Britain and the persons entering without licence were to be treated as interlopers. For a case of trespass or assault committed by these Englishmen on the people of India and for cases of small debt, they were placed under the jurisdiction of the Justices of Peace. Those trading, residing or holding moveable property at a distance of more than ten miles from a presidency town, were placed, for civil cases, under the jurisdiction of Civil Courts, while for criminal matters, special arrangements were to be made. It was also provided that those of the Englishmen who had their residence at a distance of more than ten miles from a presidency town, would necessarily register themselves with a District Court. Special clauses were also added for punishment of offences relating to coinage, theft, perjury and forgery.

The Company was required to maintain its commercial accounts distinct from territorial ones. In the use of the Indian revenues it was clearly laid down that the first consideration would be given to the maintenance of forces and the payment of interest, second to civil and commercial establishments and third to the charges on the revenues of the Company. Except in a case of special requisition, the maximum number of troops the Crown could now send to India at the Company's cost, was to be 20,000. The Company could keep a maximum number of 29,000 Indian troops to be paid from the Indian revenues. For those troops it could make laws and regulations and hold Court Martials. The dividend was fixed at the rate of  $10\frac{1}{2}\%$ , five-sixths of a surplus going to the State. No other payments were to be made from the Company's commercial profits unless the payments of dividends had been made. In order to provide for failure, when there was a surplus in revenues, the Company set aside £1,000,000 for the purpose.

The Company was required to appoint one Bishop at Calcutta with three Archdeacons to work under him. This was a concession given to the religious enthusiasts. The Company was required to set apart a sum of one lakh rupees every year which would be "applied to the revival and improvement of literature and encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."

These were the important provisions of the Act which clearly proclaimed the sovereignty of the Crown over the Company's territorial acquisitions of India. The powers of the Board of Control being considerably enlarged, the Company was made more subservient to the Crown and Parliament and the clear establishment of the Board's control over the institutions for civil and military training

to the Company's servants was portent of considerable significance.

Nor was the abolition of the Company's trade monopoly for India less significant. The private merchants were permitted to go and settle in India and thus to introduce a severe competition in trade which prior to this was entirely in the Company's hands. The value of trade thus tremendously increased. It being worth only £ 13 millions in 1813, in 1865 the figure reached was £100 million.

This throwing open of the Indian trade to the private merchants while being very much beneficial to the British who reaped enormous profits thereby becoming capable of effectively meeting the challenge of the Continental system of Napoleon, brought a bitter economic exploitation of the people of India. Indian raw materials were taken to England, while manufactured goods of that country were dumped into the Indian markets. The Lancashire industrialists began to roll in millions, while the industries of India tottered, tumbled and died. An untold misery was brought to India, thus converting it into an appalling picture of poverty and helplessness.

The Christian missionaries of England were permitted to come freely and settle in this country. This had a wholesome effect in the sense that large numbers of missionary schools and colleges were opened for the education of the Indians. But an unfortunate side of it was the fact that these missionaries soon became arrogant, and started openly condemning the Indian faiths which they termed as barbaric. This developed racial bitterness between the English and the Indians.

The provision for setting apart one lakh rupees for the development of education in India was a welcome development. It laid the foundations of the English system of education in India which threw open the inculcating gates to the progressive English literature on liberty and equality for the Indian mind. With this the freedom of their private British merchants to come to India, the European culture began freely to be imported into India.

### **The Wars**

It is with the background of this Act, that Lord Hastings landed in India, where the conditions were indeed precarious, though the French danger had almost passed away as a result of the decline of the ascendancy of Napoleon, and the conquest in 1810 of Mauritius, which had served as a base of naval operations against this country.

Among the Indian states, when Hastings arrived in India, there were three categories of states with each of which the British had a different type of relations. One was the category of those states with which the British had concluded subsidiary alliances, under which

the British undertook the responsibility of internal as well as the external protection; while the state concerned agreed to receive a 'subsidiary force', to be maintained at the state's own expense. Under this type of alliance, a state almost completely sold away its political independence to the British. The second category was of those states which had almost a similar dependence on the British as above, but these states did not have to receive any 'subsidiary force'. And the last category was of those states, the independence of which recognised by the British, the relations here being conducted by ordinary treaties.

In the time of Wellesley, a large number of the princes had been brought under the first two categories. 'The Mahommedan aspirations had particularly been crushed so as to leave no trouble for Hastings in connection with them. The Nizam had been brought under the subsidiary system; Karnatak had been annexed; while the dynasty in Mysore having been changed, it was rendered completely dependent on the British. Wellesley had also tried to deal with the Marathas, but before he was able to bring them into complete subjection he had been recalled. And it was here that one of the real troubles for Hastings lay.

*The Marathas.* The condition of the Marathas requires special attention. The Marathas had no efficient system of administration in the territories they ruled. The worst evil from which they suffered was their practice of levying *chauth* outside the limits of their own territories, which in course of time was bound to bring about contest among different Maratha states, and a mutual struggle for ascendancy. There was thus a quarrel among themselves, in which the Peshwa being defeated by Holkar, appealed to the British for protection. A subsidiary treaty was signed in 1802 at Bassein, by which the suzerainty of the Marathas was reduced to the status of a dependent, which was not quite palatable to them. There was a natural bitterness in the Maratha minds, and the Second Maratha War resulted in 1802-3. In this way the powers of Sindhia and the Bhonsla Raja were crushed. Gaekwad having already accepted a subsidiary alliance, only Holkar was left unsubdued. For a short time after this the tables were turned against the British. Sindhia rose in revolt; and Wellesley being bitterly criticised for his policy of war and aggression, was recalled. But in the meanwhile the situation took yet another turn. Holkar having received crushing defeats, fled before Lord Lake; and Sindhia returned to his allegiance to the British as soon as he could. Peace was concluded towards the end of 1805 in which, however, instead of taking an opportunity of crushing the Maratha power once for all, a policy of weak conciliation was adopted. Sindhia got back Gwalior and Gohund, and the Chambal river was fixed as

the boundary line between his territories and those of the Company. Holkar who had become almost homeless, was also offered very advantageous terms. He was brought under a subsidiary alliance. And to satisfy the Maratha aspirations the British protection was withdrawn from over the Rajputs thus leaving them subject to the Maratha and the Pathan plunder and rapacity. The policy of non-intervention after this was commenced.

The settlement made in 1805, particularly the treaties concluded with Holkar and Sindhia and the policy of non-intervention which followed after this, left the Maratha chiefs like Sindhia, Holkar and the Bhonsla Raja independent in their diminished territories, free to devastate what remained outside the British protection, to deeply resent their losses to the British and to have a growing feeling to avenge the past with impunity. Bladensburg writes about them : 'These princes were military chiefs of irregular troops in the possession of a country, rather than territorial sovereigns; their dominion over their subjects was uncertain and precarious and was maintained by force, while their principal occupation was to levy, at the point of the sword, contributions and exactions from reluctant tributaries. The natural consequences followed, and there were perpetual scenes of war, anarchy, and bloodshed in those miserable states, disastrous to all prosperity, and dangerous to the neighbouring British pro-

At the time Hastings came to India, there was a complete confusion in the territories of Holkar. From 1811 they had been under a child Holkar whose custody was contested between his father's widow and a soldier of fortune, Amir Khan. Minto's efforts since 1812 to bring Bhonsla under a subsidiary alliance had failed. Holkar was weak, but Sindhia and the Bhonsla Raja were engaged in attacking Bhopal. The Peshwa's claims on Gaekwad were still unsettled, and were now, according to the treaty of Bassein, under the control of the British. The Peshwa suffered under the yoke of the subsidiary treaty, and was preparing to secure his freedom and his lost influence among the Marathas at any cost. The Marathas were seething with the spirit of revenge, and Hastings, therefore, had to face this trouble.

*The Pindaris.* Besides the Marathas, Hastings also had to face serious troubles from some other quarters, among which an account of the Pindaris and the Pathans must be given. The origin of the word Pindari is not known, though it is asserted that it first occurred in 1689. According to some the word originated from *Pandour*, though the Pindaris themselves traced it from *Pinda* which was an intoxicating drink they usually took.<sup>2</sup> The Pindaris are said to have been originally Hindus who, frustrated with the oppressive and fanatic

1. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

2. Malcolm, *Central India*, I, p. 433.

rule of Aurangzeb, joined the forces of Shivaji. After his death, they attached themselves as irregular cavalry to the armies of Peshwa. Sometime after the third battle of Panipat in 1761 they ranged themselves in two parties : one attaching itself to Sindhia began to be known as Sindhia Shahi, while the other attaching itself to Holkar, began to be known as Nizam Shahi. As the Maratha power declined, the Pindaris began to dissociate themselves from them and started their plundering activities independently. "They were accustomed to assemble every year about the beginning of November, and, having placed themselves under the bravest leaders, they sallied forth in mounted bands, often several thousand strong, to burn, destroy, and search for plunder.. they spread their devastations from Mysore northwards sometimes as far as the Jumna, and baffled the attempts of more regular forces to overtake them or keep them in check."<sup>1</sup>

The important leaders of the Pindaris were Chitu, Wasil Muhammad and Karim Khan. Their centre was the valley of the Narbada where their chiefs had been able to obtain lands and carve out principalities for themselves. As the time passed the Hindu monopoly in the ranks of the Pindaris seems to have vanished. The Mulims and others, all began to be welcomed into the brotherhood. Disbanded soldiers, idlers, profligates and fugitives from justice coming from all castes added to their strength. Their number in 1814 was reckoned between 25,000 and 30,000 horsemen, about half of whom were well armed. They formed no regular and disciplined army, nor was their loyalty to their chiefs continuous. They followed whosoever could promise them a rich booty. They always avoided a pitched battle, took victims by surprise and attacked their target with a lightning speed, running away with booty. Hastings himself describes their plundering attack in the Guntar Circar : 'A village was surrounded by the Pindaris. The horrors perpetrated by these demons at other places made the poor villagers, totally unarmed and incapable of resistance, fly to the desperate resolution of burning themselves with their wives and children. The houses were all of wood and palm-leaf mats; so that most of them being set fire to at once, the dreadful sacrifice was immediately fulfilled. Some boys who had not the courage to bear the flames, escaped, and explained the circumstances. All the remainder of the inhabitants perished...Hundreds of women belonging to other villages have drowned themselves in the wells, not being able to survive the pollution they had suffered. All the young girls are carried off by the Pindaris, tied three or four, like calves on a horse, to be sold ...They carried away booty to the value of more than a million.'<sup>2</sup>

1. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 52. See also Roy, M.P. *Origin, Growth and Suppression of Pindaris* (1973) pp. 1-2. This is a Ph. D. thesis of Rajasthan University dealing with origin of Pindaris their organisational methods, leaders, their plundering activities and suppression by Lord Hastings.
2. Hastings, *Private Journal II*, p. 112; see also Roy, M.P. *op. cit.*, pp. 23-45.

The Pindaris, as is obvious, did not spare the British territories from their rapine. Occupying the territories equi-distant from the three Presidencies as they did, they moved in all directions and plundered the British territories. They devastated Gujarat in 1808-9, plundered Mirzapur in 1812, and attacked Bundelkhand in the same year. They carried on these plundering activities even after the arrival of Hastings in India. The Maratha chiefs, though dissociated from them, still secretly favoured these predatory hordes, and frequently made use of them to serve their own cause—particularly after the commencement of the British policy of non-intervention in 1805; setting their one leader against the other, when they became too formidable for them to control.

*The Pathans.* The Pathans were another body of freebooters, “without territorial relations and without responsible chiefs,” living on rapine and disorder. They, however, differed from the Pindaris in the fact that they did not follow their pursuit in a disorderly manner. Being composed of paid troops, the Pathans consisted not only of cavalry but also of a very efficient infantry and artillery. They were disciplined and followed more regular habits. Among their most successful leaders was Amir Khan who had as many as 30,000 men under his command.

*The Independent Tract.* Before Hastings arrived in India the British influence had spread far and wide. On the north-west of the Indian continent beyond the Sutlej, there lay an independent kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But the British sphere of influence and responsibility extended over more than half of the remainder of the country. The only tract which lay outside the British sphere of responsibility was a huge double wedge of territory which was driven into the centre of the Empire and separated the Presidency of Bombay from the remainder. “This wedge divided Delhi from Baroda, and formed on the one side an immense irregular triangle whose apex was south of Nagpur near the Godavari river, and on the other side an elongated figure running south as far as Mysore and lying between the sea and the Nizam’s dominions of Hyderabad.” This central tract of the Indian continent, which was independent, occasioned extensive frontiers for the British which were not easily guarded, and made communications difficult, sometimes impossible, between the various portions of the growing Empire. The greater problem, however, was that this part of the country was in an almost pitiable condition. The people were disorganised and crushed by despots and ruined by exactions. The society was on the very verge of dissolution; the country was overrun by bandits and its resources wasted by enemies; armed forces existed only to plunder, to torture and mutiny; briefly, government there was none, it had ceased to exist, there remained only

misery and oppression.<sup>1</sup> And so long as this state of affairs existed in this part of the country, the peace and prosperity in the surrounding territories under the British control and protection could not be ensured. This independent tract of the country had therefore to be settled.

*The Anglo-Nepalese War.* And then, there was yet another problem from Nepal for Hastings to face. The original inhabitants of this country came from the Mongolian stock, among whom Hindu colonists led by Rajput chieftains settled. These chieftains carved out for themselves some petty principalities, which indulged in perpetual wars and perennial anarchy till about ten years after the battle of Plassey, a mountain tribe, called Gurkhas claiming their descent from Rajputs, overran the valley of Kathmandu. The Gurkhas were far superior in their military training and discipline, to the races they conquered. Their army was trained on the English model and in about fifty years they acquired a supreme power in the country giving to it their own name. But they could not be satisfied by this, and being a very hardy, warlike stock, "they soon found their narrow mountain home too confined for them." In the north their ambitions being checked by the colossal power of China since the beginning of the nineteenth century, they had started pressing on the "ill-defined frontiers of Bengal and Oudh, and about this time they seized some districts in the southern lowlands claimed by the East India Company."<sup>2</sup> In 1813, commissioners were appointed by both the sides to conduct judicial investigation of the claims of the two parties on the disputed territories. The investigation made it apparent that the Gurkhas had no vestige of a right on any of the territories they seized. Lord Minto, therefore, addressed a formal letter in 1813 asking them in a conciliatory language to vacate these districts. The answer to this letter arrived only after Hastings assumed his high office in India, and its contents made it evident that force would have to be employed if the question with the Gurkhas was to be settled.

Such were the political conditions in India in 1813, when Lord Hastings assumed control of the Indian affairs. Hastings had come to India determined to carry on the policy of non-intervention of his predecessors, but the circumstances here changed him soon.

The Nepal problem had to be solved first. After efforts at a peaceful settlement with Nepal had failed, an army of invasion consisting of 34,000 soldiers was prepared which marched against that

1. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 55, 60.

2. Roberts, *History of British India*, p. 280

country in 1814. Although the Gurkhas could not muster more than 12,000 regular troops and some raw levies imperfectly armed and only occasionally well-affected to their rulers, in the first campaign during 1814-15, the British failure was almost perilous. General Gillespie, a well known hero of the fighting in Java, led an assault upon a mountain fort, but not only was repulsed, but killed together with five hundred of his men. General Martindale could not proceed beyond Jytak, General Marley also accomplished absolutely nothing, and the central attacks on Palpa and Kathmandu were driven back with a heavy loss. Only General Ochterlony in the extreme west of Nepal achieved some success, but that was insignificant. By the end of January 1815 the British had badly failed, suffering heavy losses, while the Gurkhas elated by their success, defied every force sent against them and still held the passes.

Metcalf wrote on 15 January : "We have met an enemy who shows decidedly greater bravery and greater steadiness than our troops possess; and it is impossible to say what may be the end of such a reverse of the order of things. In some instances, our troops, European and native, have been repulsed by inferior numbers with sticks and stones. In others our troops have been charged by enemy sword in hand, and driven for miles like a flock of sheep....Our power rested solely on our military superiority. With respect to one enemy, that is gone. In this war, dreadful to say, we have had numbers on our side, and skill and bravery on the side of our enemy."<sup>1</sup>

The critics of Hastings accused him of having failed to provide beforehand for the peculiar difficulties of the campaign. But it was little understood that Nepal was a country, the way to which lay through a rugged and impracticable region full of defensive files, the geography of which was not known. The Gurkhas were one of the best fighting races of the world, ready to take an intelligent advantage of every military position in their native hills, while on the other hand the soldiers and the officers of the army of invasion had absolutely no experience in mountain operations. Moreover the Gurkhas' occupation and fortification of all the passes leading to their country added seriously to the British difficulties. Nor were the British generals fully trained in the peculiarities and intricacies of mountain warfare.

In the meanwhile, the failure of the British in Nepal produced the worst effects in India. The Gurkhas had already sent their emissaries to the Pindari chieftains. Ranjit Singh, to Sindhia and even to Burma and China and others concerned far and wide. The Pindaris prepared to take the opportunity; Amir Khan, the Pathan chief, showed signs of activity; Ranjit Singh collected an army of 20,000 soldiers at Lahore, and is said to have moved them to the

1. Quoted by Kulkarni, V.B., *British Statesmen in India*, p. 100.



banks of the Sutlej; and last, but not least, the Marathas began to believe that the time had arrived when they could assume their offensive against the British and pay off the old scores.

Hastings, however, was not discouraged. He sought for fresh means to conquer his difficulties. Luck also favoured him. Ranjit Singh was threatened by an invasion from Afghanistan, the Pindaris developed dissension in their ranks, and the commanders of Sindhia began to fight among themselves. There was, therefore, no possibility any more of the British enemies combining together. Fresh reinforcements began to be sent towards Nepal, and the success began to kiss the English feet. In the summer of 1815, the Gurkhas began to seek for peace. On 28 November, the Gurkha envoy signed a draft treaty at Sagauli with the British, under which (1) the Gurkhas had to cede to them most of the Terai, or the fertile plains skirting the southern limits of Nepal and extending from the upper Ganges to the Tista river. The British also secured the districts of Garhwal and Kumaon, which gave them thus the site of Simla. The North-Western frontiers of the British were thus extended right upto the mountains. The British agreed to pay an annual subsidy of two lakh rupees as a compensation for the loss the Nepalese incurred. (2) Nepal recognised independence of the Raja of Sikkim, and (3) accepted a Resident at the court of Kathmandu.

The treaty was ratified by the Supreme Government at Calcutta on 9 December; but in the meanwhile, the war faction being again in the ascendant in the court of the Nepalese Raja, he refused to ratify it. A fresh campaign was made necessary, and in the beginning of February 1816 the advance was once again made into the Nepalese territories. When it became quite clear to the Nepalese that the British meant business, the official Red Seal of the Gurkhas was affixed in haste to the treaty of Sagauli, and it was despatched to the British camp.

Once the victory placed Hastings above the suspicion of weakness, he decided to be lenient towards Nepal so that a lasting friendship could be established with that Court. In the final arrangements thus made, the frontier between Nepal and the British territories was traced out and masonry pillars placed on it. Major portion of the Terai was given back to Nepal in lieu of the annual subsidy of two lakhs of rupees which the British had to pay. A small portion of the Terai which skirted the territories of Oudh, was handed over to the Nawab Wazir of Oudh in lieu of payment of half the debt of two crores of rupees which the British had incurred from him during the war. The remaining half, however, was never repaid, and Lord Hastings, was easily able to ratify in a letter to the Directors : "This.....enables me to assert that the Gurkha war has not cost the Company one single shilling."<sup>1</sup> Another small portion of the Terai

1. Thompson Edward, *The Making of the Indian Princes*, p. 187.

was given to the Raja of Sikkim, with whom the British signed a protective treaty in 1817 by which a barrier was drawn between Bhutan and the eastern frontier of Nepal. And the British retained only that part of it which was necessary for the rectification of their frontier line with Nepal. The treaty of Sagauli was modified on the lines mentioned, above and cordial relations were established with Nepal. From now onwards the northern frontiers of the British were secured for ever, and permanently good relations were established with the Nepalese who recruited themselves into the British forces in large numbers and provided them thus with one of the best fighting hands.

The Charter Act of 1813 having thrown open the Indian trade, the Court of Directors apprehended a serious deterioration in their financial position as a result of the loss of this monopoly and, therefore, in the initial stages they did not look on Hastings' war against Nepal with a friendly eye. But when they were convinced that Hastings had undertaken this war as an unavoidable last resort, and when Hastings did ultimately succeed in winning it, they unanimously bestowed upon him praises and thanks. On this occasion Lord Hastings was created Marquess of Hastings, and was also created a Baronet.

*The Pindari War.* The Pindaris, as we have referred above, were spreading terror and destruction all around. Lord Hastings very seriously desired to crush their predatory system once for all. But killing of the dogs was bound to provoke poachers, for any such attempt was bound to involve the British simultaneously into a war with the Marathas who supported the Pindaris, and who would definitely try to take the advantage to pay off their old scores. The home authorities, therefore, still convinced of the wisdom of the policy of non-intervention, strictly cautioned Hastings about any "offensive operations against the Pindaris, either with a view to their utter extirpation, or in anticipation of expected danger."<sup>1</sup> Nor were they in favour of risking a war in extending protection to the victims of the Pindari raids and the Maratha plunders.

Lord Hastings thus was helpless about taking any action against the Pindaris. But the circumstances soon changed. The Pindaris were becoming bolder as a result of the British indifference towards their predatory pursuits. In 1815 they plundered the dominions of the Nizam, and carried their raid even beyond the river Kistna, into the Madras Presidency, carrying away a huge booty. In February 1816 they took their predatory incursion into the Northern Circars, another British territory, and subjected it to an utter devastation, carrying away huge booty and every young girl they could lay their hands upon. In the meanwhile in March 1816, Wazir Muhammad, the

1. Marshman, J.C., *History of India* (in 3 vols.), II, p. 305.

Nawab of Bhopal, to whom Hastings had extended protection against Sindhia and Bhonsla in October 1814, died. His son Nasir Muhammad succeeded him, and being still surrounded by serious troubles at the hands of the Marathas and others, he applied to Hastings for protection. But the latter could do nothing beyond expressing sentiments of goodwill towards the new Nawab. Besides, as Hastings reported, there was a conclusive evidence that Pindaris, the Peshwas and other Maratha chiefs had formed a wide conspiracy "for the expulsion of the British from India."<sup>1</sup> If the British did not act on time, their very existence in India could become problematical. It was therefore not long before the Board of Control in England understood that the Pindaris had to be dealt with and the British prestige in the eyes of the Indian princes saved, by extending them protection when applied for. Hastings was authorised for an action.

Hastings now made large scale preparations. As he apprehended trouble at the hands of the Marathas and others who might exploit any British weakness, he gathered a huge army of nearly 120,000 men and 300 guns—"the largest army collected up to that time for one purpose under the British flag in India." This army was divided into two parts—the Army of Hindustan which consisted of four divisions and which was commanded by Hastings himself, and the Army of the Deccan which consisted of five divisions and was placed under the command of Sir Thomas Hislop. The plan of Lord Hastings was that with one cordon of the army he would encircle the Pindaris, while with another he would make a wider ring facing outwards to check any attempt of the Marathas to break through to the assistance of the Pindaris. But before undertaking any military movement, he made every effort to improve British relations with the Indian princes. The princes of Central India and Rajputana, Sindhia, Holkar and even Amir Khan, were approached. As a consequence, subsidiary treaties were concluded in 1817 with several states in Malwa. Nasir Muhammad of Bhopal also signed a subsidiary treaty, and so did the Rajas of Udaipur, Jodhpur and several others.

At Poona, Baji Rao the Peshwa had already been placed in a position of dependence by the treaty of Bassein, as referred to earlier. He however still retained certain rights over other states which he could now enforce with the help of the British. Among these rights were those of a financial nature over the Gaekwad of Baroda, for the settlement of which the British Government sent Gaekwad's Minister, Gangadhar Shastri, to Poona under their own safe conduct. The Peshwa, however, suffering under the galling yoke of the British, tried to secure Gaekwad's support for his rebellious plans through Gangadhar Shastri. The latter being a firm upholder of the British influence, refused to be a tool in the Peshwa's hands. Not only that, when the negotiations failed, he broke off the engagement of his son

1. Roy, M.P., *op. cit.*, p. 198.

with a sister of the Peshwa's wife, just when they were about to marry. This enraged Baji Rao, and Shastri was therefore basely murdered. In this crime the guilt of Trimbakji, a favourite of the Peshwa, was certain, but that of the Peshwa himself was doubtful. To test the conduct of the Peshwa the British Resident at Poona, Mountstuart Elphinstone, who possessed the qualities of a statesman, scholar and a man of action, demanded an immediate apprehension of Trimbakji. The Peshwa hesitated for some time, but seeing the firmness of the Resident he ultimately surrendered him on 11 September 1815. Trimbakji, however, escaped from his prison after only a year of his confinement. The Peshwa denied any hand in it, adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the British, concluded an agreement on his disputes with Gaekwad in February 1817 on reasonable terms, and showed a hearty sympathy with the British plans against the Pindaris.

But all this seems to have been in his effort to throw dust into the Resident's eyes. All this time the Peshwa remained in communication with Trimbakji and kept raising fresh levies on the excuse that they were meant to help the British against the Pindaris. The Resident, however, was not an immature politician. He discovered the treachery, ordered to Poona a strong detachment and presented the Peshwa with an ultimatum. The latter thoroughly alarmed, yielded to the British demands and signed on 13 June 1817 the treaty of Poona which replaced the treaty of Bassein. The new treaty outlawed Trimbakji and handed over his family to the British as hostages. The treaty of Bassein was renewed with certain modifications. The Peshwa ceded to the British some of his most important strongholds, some parts of the Deccan, the sea-board of the province of Konkan, and his rights in Bundelkhand, over Malwa, and all places in the north of the Narbada. He also renounced his intrigues in Central India and agreed never to claim a suzerainty over the Maratha confederacy. The subsidiary force in his state was considerably increased.

Yet, however, the Peshwa learnt nothing from his experience. "While he had no ability to regain his lost position as head of the Maratha confederacy," writes G. S. Sardesai, "he committed the folly of nursing a secret feeling of resentment against the British power and employed all kinds of subterfuges to overcome them. But he received no support from his nation, who deeply resented his acceptance of British aid at Bassein at the sacrifice of liberty."<sup>1</sup>

Now coming to Nagpur, Raja Raghuji died in March 1816, leaving behind him an imbecile and blind son Pursaji to succeed as the next Bhonsla. The regency was contested between the chiefs, among whom Apa Sahib, a nephew of Raghuji ultimately

1. Sardesai, G.S., *The Main Currents of Maratha History*, p. 194.

succeeded. But the latter did not feel himself secure, and applied to the British for a subsidiary alliance. The application was willingly granted and the treaty was signed on 27 May 1816. One of the advantages to the British was that they occupied a military position near the Narbada from where the Pindaris could be effectually dealt with. The British secured a new ally who seemed to be content with his position, but still was untried and Hastings knew that he could not be relied upon.

The court of the young Holkar who was yet a child, was in confusion. The two parties supporting respectively the widow of Holkar's father and Amir Khan, came to an open clash towards the close of 1816, though neither of them gained an advantage over the other. Daulat Rao Sindhia, though weakened by disorganisation and rebellious elements among his troops and internal dissensions was in a secret and sure sympathy with the Pindaris and was trying to take an advantage of the new situation. In fact both Sindhia and Holkar had been keenly interested in maintaining the predatory system, and therefore meant a source of trouble to Hastings. The latter expected no trouble from the side of Gaekwad, Bhopal and many of the Rajput states, though there was some uneasiness with regard to the Nizam. But Sindhia and Holkar had to be disarmed in September 1817, therefore, Sindhia was approached for permission to march the British troops across his territories, from Deccan towards the valley of the Narbada. But though outwardly Sindhia showed his sympathy for the British in their project against the Pindaris, relying upon the Peshwa and pressed by his generals, he evaded the British demand. Lord Hastings, however, was not to be led astray. He forwarded stricter demands, and the negotiations were not yet concluded when the hostilities broke out. The negotiations with Holkar which were carried on almost the same terms as with the Sindhia, also suffered the same fate.

*The Third Maratha War.* A hunt for the Pindaris therefore got merged into the Third Maratha War. This had been anticipated by Hastings, and that is why the military preparations had been made on so large a scale. Careful of the surroundings, Lord Hastings started the military movements towards the last quarter of 1817. As Major Ross-of-Bladensburg writes : "The Pindaris were to be rooted out of their hunts which lay in Malwa, somewhat to the east of Ujjain, north of the Narbada and between Bhopal and the dominions of Sindhia and Holkar; to accomplish this it had been decided to surround them on all sides,—on the north and east from Bengal, on the south from the Deccan, and on the west from Gujarat,—and to keep the native states in check." While the negotiations with Sindhia were still going on, two strong corps were suddenly posted on the northern frontiers of Sindhia, "about sixty miles apart, and scarcely two marches distant from Gwalior."<sup>1</sup> This was a complete

1. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

surprise to Daulat Rao, who under compulsion, signed on 5 November 1817, the treaty of Gwalior by which the clause of the Treaty of Surjiarjangaon under which the British had been debarred from making treaties with Rajput princes, was abrogated; and Sindhia was bound to assist the British against the Pindaris. Sindhia, as Hastings wrote in his Private Journal, subscribed "to all the conditions which I dictated, and has swallowed a bitter drench in so doing." Later on Sindhia tried to create some trouble for the British once again, but he was properly dealt with and kept in his place.

On the other hand, the Peshwa who had been raising troops ostensibly to attack the Pindaris, concentrated a force as strong as 35,000 and suddenly forwarded to the Resident, Elphinstone, on the very day the Treaty of Gwalior was concluded with Sindhia, certain demands which could not be conceded. The Resident apprehending trouble, vacated Poona just before Baji Rao himself marched at the head of a body of his troops, barbarically plundered and set the Presidency buildings on fire. As many as 2,800 British troops had in the meanwhile gathered at Kirki, about three miles away from the town. The Resident also reached that place and before the Peshwa could fall upon them, the British took the initiative, advanced and attacked the 26,000 strong Marathas. The battle was brilliantly fought by the British, and the Peshwa's forces were forced to fall back upon Poona, losing about 500 of their number in the field, as against the British loss of only 86. The British waited for some time for a reinforcement to arrive. But on 16 November when they marched on Poona, they discovered to their surprise that the Peshwa had fled southwards. The British pursued and defeated him in several engagements, but the Peshwa himself could not be captured. He doubled back on a twisted course, eluding the British and trying vainly to break through into Berar. During the flight he overpowered the Raja of Satara, the descendant of Shivaji and the titular suzerain of the Marathas.

The Peshwa Baji Rao however failed to penetrate into Khandesh and turned once again towards his capital, Poona. Colonel Burr who held the city, requested reinforcement from Sirur, and Captain Staunton marched towards Poona with 500 infantry, 250 cavalry and only two guns. On the morning of 1 January when Staunton had covered only about half his way to Poona, he suddenly found himself intercepted by whole of the Peshwa's army which numbered 20,000 horse and 8,000 foot, about half of whom were Arabs. To avoid the plains, Staunton marched to a nearby village, Koregaon, with the hope of avoiding the Maratha danger. But to his surprise some of the best positions in the village had already been occupied by the Arabs. Still, however, he did seize certain buildings for his purpose. His little force, tired, hungry and thirsty, was attacked by the Maratha infantry; the Maratha cavalry being unable to join, and, their artillery being weak. Wave after wave of the invaders

came, but were gallantly repulsed by the British, till night fell and one of the British guns was captured. The battle was almost lost, and the Arabs encouraged, began inhumanly to murder the British wounded. Staunton made his last effort. A counter-attack was delivered, the gun retaken, and a large number of the enemy slaughtered. The British expected another attack during the night, but to their pleasant surprise the Marathas, being discouraged, quietly moved away towards the south. Staunton's purpose being fulfilled, he returned from here to Sirur. In this battle the Marathas lost 700 men; while out of their eight officers the British lost 5, and had 271 of their men killed.

In the meanwhile, Lord Hastings had taken a monumental decision to abolish the office of the Peshwa. There were several reasons for this. Baji Rao had evinced a spirit of hostility continuously for several years. No treaty could control him. Moreover, he had some sacredness attached to the office he occupied, and was a rallying point to the discontented. His authority being respected among the Marathas even outside his territorial possessions, no treaty could curtail his influence which was thus formidable. Moreover if his office were destroyed, it would be a wholesome object-lesson to the minor chiefs. So a proclamation was issued abolishing the Peshwa's office, and declaring Baji Rao, who was still in arms and at large, an outlaw.

Simultaneously, to conciliate the Marathas the decision was taken to set up a new head of the Marathas in the person of the Raja of Satara as the representative of Shivaji. His powers, however, were suitably curtailed to restrain his ambitions.

The Raja of Satara was in the possession of Baji Rao whose pursuit was now carried on by General Smith. Smith unexpectedly came upon the Peshwa at Ashti. The Peshwa considering his personal safety important, galloped off leaving behind his very able general Gokla to cover his retreat. Gokla gave a fierce battle but was killed, and the Raja was fortunately recovered. This was a very great loss to the Peshwa.

After baffling and eluding the British over and over again, the Peshwa was attacked at Seoni between Wardha and Penganga once again, where the British suffered only two wounded, while the Peshwa lost as many as 1,000 men. After this about two-thirds of the Peshwa's army deserted and scattered away, while the Peshwa himself escaped once again.

From here the Peshwa now proceeded to seek an asylum in Sindhia's territories. But his passage thither being blocked, he was compelled to offer his surrender to Malcolm who was preparing to



surround him. The offer was made on the condition that the Peshwa and his followers would be well treated, and that the Peshwa would be granted an annual pension of eight lakh rupees. Malcolm accepted the offer at his own responsibility, and the matter was thus settled. The Peshwa's confidant, Trimbakji, was condemned to life-long imprisonment in the fort of Chunar, near Benaras.

Hastings later on disapproved of Malcolm's action, as he wanted an unconditional surrender of the Peshwa to teach the others a lesson; and moreover he considered the annual grant of money too large. Malcolm's plea however was that if the Peshwa's offer had not been accepted, he would have taken refuge in the fort of Asirgarh which was impossible at the particular time to besiege. And moreover till the Peshwa remained at large, peace in the Deccan could not be restored, which would mean a considerable protraction of the war.

Be that as it may, the Peshwa's power was brought to an end. "The banishment of the Peshwa," writes V.B. Kulkarni, "was mourned in Maharashtra as the consummation of the national downfall, but the man himself was unaffected by the overwhelming nature of the tragedy. He blithely contracted more marriages and spent his long and disgraceful life, dividing his hours between religious performances and dissipation. It is impossible to render a tribute of tears, which fallen-greatness so spontaneously evokes, to a man who so deliberately destroyed a great heritage."<sup>1</sup>

The Raja of Satara in the meanwhile was conducted by General Smith to Satara, where he received the investiture from the Central Government at the hands of the Commissioner, on 11 April 1818. P.E. Roberts writes that "the rule of the restored dynasty proved an evil and incompetent one, and Satara was one of the states to which subsequently the Doctrine of Lapse was applied by Dalhousie."<sup>2</sup> For his incompetency, however, it may be argued, the British Company was as much responsible as the ruler himself. And the application of the Doctrine of Lapse perhaps was much more due to Dalhousie's aggressive designs than due to the incompetency of the Raja, as we will subsequently see.

In the meanwhile a ring of fire and steel closed round the Pindaris. The latter under their leaders, Karim, Wasil Muhammad and Chitu, had held a meeting in September in order to chalk out some common programme to fight the British. But due to their mutual jealousies and divisions they failed. Contrary to their previous experiences, no Indian prince this time offered to give protection to their families. Depressed and dismayed, for a consi-

1. Kulkarni, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

2. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 287.



derable time they remained inactive near and to the west of Bilasa, in the vain hope that at least the Marathas would come to their assistance. But the latter had already been dealt with in a befitting manner. Ultimately Wasil Muhammad proved to be the first to attack a British position in order that he with his followers might effect an escape. He was followed by the rest of his community. But no movement could help them. The Pindaris first moved towards the north, but were checked and made to run towards the south and east. Many were cut and destroyed, though a small number of them did escape as a result of their wonderful mobility. Amir Khan the Pathan leader already in the beginning of the campaign, had been prevailed upon to disband his soldiers and accept the Nawabship of Tonk. Karim, one of the Pindari leaders, also accepted lands at Gorakhpur and settled down together with his family and about 600 of his followers as a peaceful citizen. His example was followed by some others, but many refused the British offers. Wasil fled to Sindhia, but was later on captured and put into a prison where he committed suicide. Chitu turned into a wanderer, and was devoured by a tiger in a jungle. Thus were the Pindari bands destroyed.

Apa Sahib at Nagpur, who had by this time murdered Pursaji and himself ascended the throne, and the Government of the child Holkar, also revolted, strangely enough, just at the time when the cordon of the British troops was being closed round them. Despite all the heavy odds the British defeated Apa Sahib's forces on the Sitabaldi hill on 27 November while the forces of Holkar were utterly routed in a battle fought at Mahidpur on 21 December.

After the battle of Sitabaldi, Apa Sahib was pardoned and restored. But no sooner was this done than he started his hostile activities again. He started collecting an Arab force at Chanda against the British, and issued orders to his *killadars* and feudatories not to surrender the forts he had been bound to do. When Baji Rao also was reported to be moving towards Apa Sahib, the British apprehending a junction between the two forces took a strong action. Jenkins moved against Apa Sahib and made him a prisoner, placing him for safe custody in the Residency until his future could be decided upon by the Governor-General. This happened in the spring of 1818. By this time it also having been ascertained that Apa Sahib was deeply involved in the murder of Pursaji, it was decided that he should be deposed and sent to the fort of Allahabad and that in his place a successor should be appointed in the person of Baji Rao Bhonsla, a child and son of Pursaji's sister. The decision having been taken, a British guard with Apa Sahib left for Allahabad on 3 May, but on the way he escaped by bribing some Indian soldiers of his escort and soon all his traces were lost. Although his flight was not of much importance, it did prolong the war unnecessarily for sometime more.

Joining some discontented Indians near Betul, Apa Sahib started his military preparations once again. Due to the rains the action against him could not be taken till March 1819. Apa Sahib joined by the Pindari chief Chitu, took refuge in the fort of Asirgarh which was besieged on 17 March. The Killadar who was learnt to have been secretly instructed by Sindhia to resist, capitulated on 9 April, but before that Apa Sahib had escaped again. He was offered a pension of two lakh rupees and a residence in the British territories on the same terms as with the Peshwa. But he did not return. He escaped to the Punjab where Ranjit Singh, though refusing to countenance him, tolerated his presence. Later on he went to Rajputana where he was allowed to live under surveillance till he died without giving any further trouble to the British.

Thus was the great revolution effected, the significance of which Hastings himself could not immediately comprehend. Dazzled by so sudden an alteration in Central India, he himself wrote in his Private Journal in February 1818 that he was "still too near it to comprehend it thoroughly." The Pindaris had been destroyed, Sindhia, was humbled and rendered impotent without striking a blow, office of the Peshwa was abolished, Holkar's territories were reduced to half, and Nagpur also losing its territories, was reduced to the status of a vassal. Some of the bitterest enemies were either put behind bars or pensioned off. And Roberts writes, the British protection "now shadowed the ancient houses of the Rajput states, and her dominion extended from Cape Comorin to the Banks of the Sutlej...Such peace and order as had not been known since the greatest days of the Mughal Empire extended through Central India."<sup>1</sup>

Major Ross-of-Bladensburg also writes : "There is probably no period in the history of British progress in the East more full of interest than that which has just been described; beginning in the autumn of 1817 and ending in the following June, when the war practically came to a conclusion. In that short space of times tremendous changes had taken place in the vast tracts of the country where independent native rule prevailed, and the whole continent, bounded on the north-west by the Sutlej, was summarily brought into subjection to the Government of Calcutta."<sup>2</sup>

Nor can one offer any serious criticism of the measures Hastings adopted for the extermination of the Maratha power, or that of the Pindaris. The characterless Pindaris who carried barbaric war and destruction wherever they went and destroyed the country's peace, needed no excuse for their annihilation. Nor did the Maratha chiefs deserve any other treatment than what they actually got. The chances to prove their integrity and faithfulness were given repeatedly to

1. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

2. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

them. But fools as they were, they had neither a true love for their own nation beyond their selfish motives, nor an ability to organise men, fight and defeat the enemy even when they had a stupendous superiority in number and military supply. And lacking both the above qualities, they acted criminally in failing to remain faithful and loyal to the British from whom they could certainly have secured better terms than what they actually got.

### RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MARATHA TERRITORY

When the Pindaris were destroyed and the Third Maratha War won, the task of reconstruction of the territories which fell under the direct or indirect control of the British had to be undertaken. The task was a gigantic one, as it involved very far reaching changes over as many as half a million square miles of territory. But Lord Hastings performed it successfully, assisted as by some of the best administrators which the Anglo-Indian community could afford such as Munro, Metcalfe, Elphinstone, Ochterlony and Malcolm. The principles over which Hastings worked for the purpose were the assertion of the paramount English authority over the foreign relations of the Indian states which necessarily involved an effective control of their military concern, disturbance of the existing internal order as little as possible, and addition to the direct British control of only such of the territories as were necessary for the security of their power or the revenues of which were sufficient for the maintenance of the subsidiary forces—the exception being made only in the case of the dominions of the Peshwa the control of which was directly assumed. The power and influence of the faithful and loyal were enhanced, and a new delimitation of rights and frontiers was made.

In the Deccan, efforts were made to reconcile all classes of society. The fief-holders were granted every security, if they did not interfere with the rights of others. Full religious freedom and protection was assured, and the people were made to know that the days of the Maratha extortions were now over. The defeated forces of Baji Rao, if not drafted into the British army, were encouraged to settle down peacefully, and none was permitted to disturb the peace of the country. Those of the Arab soldiers of the ex-Peshwa who could not be controlled, were shipped off to their own country.

The territories of the ex-Peshwa were split up. Some parts were given over to some Indian princes, Konkan and some other parts were added to Bombay while rest of the Peshwa's dominions were placed under the British officers.

*The Peshwa Territories.* These territories acquired from the Peshwa were entrusted for settlement to Elphinstone who proclaimed: "Officers will be forthwith appointed to collect a regular and

moderate revenue on the part of the British Government, to administer justice, and to encourage the cultivation of the soil." He wrote to a friend : "My employment is very humble. It is to learn which system is in force and to preserve it unimpaired...I shall think I have done a great service to this country, if I can prevent people making laws for it until they see whether it wants them."<sup>1</sup>

Elphinstone had been resident at Poona, and he knew that the Maratha system though crude, had worked well so long as the officers who enforced it were good and honest. They had their panchayats who administered justice. Their criminal justice was erratic under which, for instance, whenever robbery was committed on a stretch of road, a young man from the district was arrested and executed on the spot where the crime took place. It worked well, and that stretch of road was rendered completely safe. The people abhorred the Cornwallis Code of Bengal, with its time, money and energy consuming process of petitions, stamps, trials, lawyers, judges, the circuit courts and the courts of appeal. Munro saved Madras from it, and Elphinstone wanted to save the territories in his charge.

Elphinstone therefore adopted a simple system under which the village panchayats were re-organised and made more efficient. The village headman called a *patel*, continued in his office. Magistrates were vested with all powers, judicial, collection of revenue, supervision of police, etc., though the power to award capital punishment was not conferred on them. Principle of acquittal in case of a doubtful guilt was adopted, the methods of trial were simple and adopted with a view to publicity. When Elphinstone discovered a plot to murder all Europeans in Poona, he hauled up the ringleaders and had them executed. This had the effect of convincing the people that the British meant business.

Elphinstone loved to work among the Maratha people, and loved the landscape of their country, its romantic scenes and innocent people. When being appointed the Governor of Bombay in 1819, he had to leave the Deccan, he did so with a feeling, and wrote quoting from Theocritus: "Wolves, O foxes, O bears hiding in the mountains, oh farewell! I, Daphnis the herdsman, no more will climb in wood and grove and glade Farewell, O Arethusa and the Rivers."<sup>2</sup>

*Bhopal.* Nasir Muhammad, the Nawab of Bhopal, had accepted the the British protection in 1817, and had remained faithful and co-operated in the British projects against the Pindaris. Some new territories were therefore added to his possessions so as to increase

1. Quoted by Woodruff, Philip, *op. cit.*, *The Founders*, pp. 218-19.

2. *ibid.*, p. 222.

considerably the political importance of this little state in the Malwa.

*Malwa* : Malwa, "a network, an archipelago, a Milky Way, of small states and estates, each claiming some ill-defined shreds of sovereignty," as Philip Woodruff terms it,<sup>1</sup> itself was entrusted for settlement to Malcolm. The territories of Malwa had been a victim of ruthless raids and merciless plunders at the hands alike of the Marathas and Pindari gangs. The country had been conquered by one power which was replaced by another, then by a third and probably by the first, converting the boundaries into a jigsaw puzzle which never remained the same for more than a decade. Here again the same principles of tampering with the existing customs and institutions as less as possible, moderate but regularly collected revenue, encouragement and improvement of cultivation, severity with tempered kindness were adopted. The remnants of the Pindari gangs were hunted down, territories of the different chiefs were clearly demarcated, and duties and obligations of the different parties and interests were clearly prescribed and entered into written agreements. Peace now reigned the countryside, and peasants tilled their lands in safety. Those who had been hunted like wild beasts, were tamed, and Malcolm wrote to his wife: "I often wish you were here to enjoy the blessings. I obtain from the poor inhabitants, who all continue to refer their happiness to me; and it joys my heart to find myself... restoring great provinces to a prosperity they have not known for years." A robber chief who was threatened by Malcolm to show his power, replied that he knew it and "such is your reputation...that the sword that is drawn against you will be weighed to the earth by curses."<sup>2</sup>

*Rajputana*. The pacification of Rajputana was entrusted to Metcalfe who was replaced in 1819 by Ochterlony. The tributes which the Marathas and the Pathans used to realise from the Rajput princes were now claimed by the East India Company, and in return for that the British protection was granted to them on the usual terms. All the Rajput states were put on an equal footing. The protective treaties were signed with the rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kotah, Udaipur and several others ; and though Ochterlony had to face certain troubles in Jaipur, elsewhere the progress was smooth. Ochterlony was able to report to the Supreme Government thus: "From the prince to the peasant, I have found every tongue eloquent in the expression of gratitude to the British Government for the blessings they enjoy. Discontent or oppression appears equally unknown, except at Ujjain, and a few other places in the immediate occupancy of Sindhia's relatives."

*Holkar*. The reformed administrative system in the territories under

1. *ibid.*, p. 210.

2. *ibid.*, p. 211.

the direct British control could not fail in having better effects on the Indian courts, such as those of Sindhia and Holkar. The Mand-sor Treaty had been signed with Holkar in January 1813. The present Holkar being yet a child, for an efficient administration of his territories 'a very capable man, Tantia Jogh, was appointed minister through the influence of the British. Though it was impossible to separate the territories of Holkar from those of Sindhia in a satisfactory manner, the Resident did enough to smooth over. Under the efficient administration of Tantia Jogh the revenues of Holkar increased from only four lakh rupees to thirty-five lakhs in 1826, the year Tantia died.

*Sindhia.* The temporary arrangement made with Sindhia in November 1817 was replaced by a permanent treaty in 1818, under which that prince forfeited practically no territory. Certain exchange of territories was however made, under which the British got the much needed Ajmer, which excluded the Maratha influence from Rajputana and gave the British a base from where they could have an effective watch over that part of the country. Sindhia had promised to support the British against their enemies, but when his duplicity with regard to Asirgarh, the Killadar of which had been secretly instructed by him to help Apa Sahib, was known, the only punishment inflicted upon him was that the fort was retained by the British in perpetuity. From that time onwards Sindhia became completely submissive to the British, and signed in 1820 a treaty which was almost the same as a subsidiary alliance, though not in name.

*Others.* The principality of Satara was placed under the administration of the British officers till September 1819, when the Raja, though still in a state of dependence, was given more powers. At Nagpur Apa Sahib was replaced by a child, and the administration of the state placed under the control of the British officers who worked under the Resident and in the name of the young prince, till after the departure of Hastings a purely Indian ministry was formed. Even then, however, the army of Nagpur remained under the British control.

The frontiers of the Nizam of Hyderabad were also more clearly demarcated as a result of the addition to his territories of certain districts which formerly belonged to the Maratha princes and in return for which that prince handed over to the British some territories of less value. A similar readjustment was made with the territories of the Gaekwad of Baroda. The ruling prince of Baroda, Anand Rao, being an imbecile, the state was administered by the British till 1819 when the prince died. Sayaji Rao, the brother of Anand Rao, succeeded to the throne and with him a new treaty was signed in 1820 under which although the British still retained the practical control of the state, increased powers were given to the new ruler in the internal affairs of the state.

Thus as a result of the new changes about two-thirds of the Indian continent fell under the direct administration of the British, while the remaining third was under the Indian princes but subject to the vigilance of the British. "The dark age of trouble and violence," wrote Prinsep, "which so long spread its malign influence over the fertile regions of Central India, has thus ceased from this time; and new era has commenced, we trust, with brighter prospects, an era of peace, prosperity and high moral improvement."<sup>1</sup>

### ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS UNDER HASTINGS

*Judicial.* Besides the territorial settlement, Lord Hastings introduced certain very important administrative reforms in the country. His judicial reforms deserve our special attention. Under the conditions that obtained before Hastings there was too much delay due to the heavy burden of work on the courts, with the result that the parties too often took the law in their own hands. It was necessary that the number of courts in the country should be increased, but the Company shirked the action because of the high expenditure involved. Hastings deserves our appreciation for the simplification and curtailment of procedure in civil cases, which removed the existing trouble to some extent.

Every *Thana* in 1814 was given a *Munsif*, to be appointed by the *Diwani Adalat* with the approval of the Provincial Court of Appeal. The decisions of a *Munsif* which involved the final confirmation of the *Diwani Adalat*, could be given for the cases up to the value of Rs 64. In case of misconduct or inefficiency the *Munsifs* could be removed by the *Diwani Adalat* where appeals from their courts lay. Besides the *Munsifs*, the *Diwani Adalat* was also authorised to appoint with the approval of the Provincial Courts of Appeal, *Sadar Amins* in every district or a city; their number depending on the requirements of a particular area. These *Sadar Amins* could hear cases up to the value of Rs 150, but enjoyed no powers to try the cases of Europeans and Americans. The appeals from their courts also lay in the *Diwani Adalat*. From the *Diwani Adalat*, as provided in 1814, the appeal could be taken to the Provincial Court of Appeal if a case had come from some lower court, but for the cases originating in the *Diwani Adalat* itself the appeal lay rather in the *Sadar Diwani Adalat*. To simplify the procedure and avoid arrears of work, however, it was provided that in certain cases there was no appeal, while in many of the rest only one appeal was permitted.

The Registrars were also empowered to decide cases up to the value of Rs 50, while in some special cases, the *Diwani Adalat* could refer to them the cases upto the value of Rs 500. From the Registrars the appeal could be taken direct to the Provincial Court of Appeal. From Rs 500 upwards, the cases were instituted in the

1. Prinsep, *Transactions*, II, p. 421.



city or *Zilla* (District) *Diawni Adalat*, while above Rs 5,000 the cases went direct to the Provincial Court of Appeal, or in certain cases to the *Sadar Diwani Adalat*. The latter was also empowered to transfer cases from the city or *Zilla Diwani Adalat* to the Provincial Court of Appeal.

Certain further changes were introduced in 1821 whereby a *Munsif* could try a case upto the value of Rs 150, while a *Sadar Amin* could go upto the value of Rs 500. And where one *Munsif* was not sufficient, two or more could be appointed.

Regulation of 1815 provided that none could be appointed on the *Sadar Diwani Adalat* unless he had worked for at least three years as a judge of the Provincial Court of Appeal, or had a judicial experience of not less than nine years. The Regulation of 1818 empowered the magistrates to award imprisonment with hard labour upto two years, and a corporal punishment upto 30 stripes.

But still more important was Hastings' action in connection with the administration of criminal justice. Cornwallis had laid down a rule against uniting the offices of Magistrate and Collector. This rule was now done away with, as according to Roberts, "Lord Hastings probably felt, and with reason that the newer generation of the Company's servants with their higher traditions would prove superior to temptations to which their predecessors had succumbed."<sup>1</sup> We do not, however, know as to how far the feelings of Hastings and the justification of Roberts proved correct in the actual practice. The Board of Control recommended that the old Indian institutions should be revived and the *Panchayats* re-established with their powers and functions. While Bengal could not act upon these recommendations and improved instead the pay and position of the Indian judges in Madras and Bombay, efforts were made to put the recommendations into effect. These recommendations of the Board had been necessitated as a result of the difficulty in augmenting the number of the English judges in India, and the high cost which the Government had to bear for their maintenance. Thomas Munro who was appointed Governor of Madras in 1820, wrote: "...more European agency is recommended as a cure for every evil. Such agency is too expensive, and even if it were not....it is in many cases much less efficient than the natives.... I have never seen any European whom I thought competent from his knowledge of the language and the people to ascertain the value of the evidence given before him." It is wrong to assume, Munro went on, that "the natives are too corrupt to be trusted.... Foreign conquerors have treated the natives with violence and often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we, none has stigmatised the whole people as unworthy of trust...."<sup>2</sup>

1. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

2. Woodruff, Philip, *The Founders*, pp. 194-95.



*The Ryots.* Some other reforms of Hastings related to the protection of the rights of ryots against zamindars. Thomas Munro introduced in Madras a *ryotwari* settlement whereunder the middleman was dispensed with and settlement was made directly with the cultivators. The story of this settlement is interesting. When Wellesley came to India, everybody seemed to be under the spell of the achievements Cornwallis had made by his permanent settlement with zamindars in Bengal. Without ascertaining whether anything like such zamindars existed in Madras, with his usual imperious certainty, Wellesley ordered that the same system should be adopted in that province also. But since no zamindars existed in Madras, the land in that province began to be auctioned out to the revenue contractors, and by 1806 this system had been introduced in more than half of the province, when suddenly it was discovered what havoc the British Company was creating in the province by putting the cultivators—the real owners of the land—into the hands of mere speculators. A debate started by one school of thought headed by Munro supporting the cause of the ryot—the cultivator—while the other headed by John Hodgson insisted that the “settlement should not be made with individuals but with the village as a whole. The committee of shareholders or the village headman would enter into an agreement, for three years, or ten years, or preferably for ever and they would decide what each man should pay.”<sup>1</sup> Hodgson won, and his system was put into force for three years. But a headman, or a committee of shareholders, was not always prepared to enter into commitments on behalf of others, and the system failed. A select Committee of Commons came out strongly in favour of Munro’s system in 1812, and it was ultimately decided to introduce the *ryotwari* system as referred to above. Munro himself was sent to Madras to introduce his system in the province.

Bengal passed its Tenancy Act in 1822 whereby tenants were given protection against ejectment or enhancement of their rent. In Bombay, Elphinstone got the lands of the tenants measured and their rights and duties defined.

*Delhi Areas.* In the meanwhile Metcalfe was working in the Delhi areas. He had been appointed Resident to the Mughal Emperor in 1812. The Emperor’s rule, however, did not extend beyond the ramparts of the Red Fort, and it was the Resident who actually administered “an area about the size of the six northern countries of England.”<sup>2</sup> Metcalfe who remained in this part till 1819, made some remarkable achievements. Capital punishment which required final approval of the Emperor and which was generally avoided, almost came to an end as a matter of convenience. And this happened in the Delhi areas, when in England for a theft of forty shillings a man could be hanged. Slave trade was abolished, the

1. *ibid.*, p. 233.

2. *ibid.*, p. 270.

crime of Sati was suppressed, and Metcalfe "collected swords and spears, beat them literally into ploughshares and returned them to the owners."<sup>1</sup> Several revenue reforms were also introduced, and the state income considerably increased.

*Education.* For the development of education also some steps were taken in the time of Lord Hastings. Before we explain as to what was done, it must be noted that at that time even in England it was not realised that the state had any duty towards the education of its subjects. The problem, as in India, was rather handled by the religious institutions like Church and the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge. It was only in 1833 that the Parliament voted £ 20,000 for the development of education, but it was not before 1856 that the state tried to check up as to how this money was spent.

In these circumstances, it does seem astonishing that the same British Parliament while renewing the Charter of the East India Company in 1813, laid down a specific condition which was embodied in the Act itself, as referred to earlier, that the company must set apart annually, a sum of one lakh rupees "to be applied to the revival and improvement of literature and encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."

In India, there were at that time some enlightened enthusiasts like Elphinstone, appointed Governor of Bombay in 1819, who himself was a scholar of English, Latin, Greek, Italian and Persian. He acted far ahead of his own country, and to save the people of his province from neglect and any harassment at the hands of his own executive officers, drew up extensive plans for their education. He instructed his officers that it was necessary to take official measures for opening schools, encouraging education through prizes, offers of employment, etc. Early marriage, debt, apathy to all improvement—"there is but one remedy for all this. which is education", Elphinstone wrote.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Hastings himself held in this regard: "The Government will never be influenced by the erroneous position that to spread information among men is to render them less tractable and less submissive to authority....."<sup>3</sup> The activities of the chaplains in India in this field were encouraged, and Hastings established some vernacular schools near Calcutta for the education of the Indians.

*The Press.* It was during the time of Lord Hastings that the first

1. *ibid.*,

2. *ibid.*, pp. 242-43.

3. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

vernacular newspaper appeared in print. He also allowed the newspapers to circulate at reduced rates of postage. In fact, during his time, the policy so far followed towards the press was reversed. A few words with regard to the early history of the press, and how it was influenced by Lord Hastings, may be advisable.

In India though we do hear of news-writers of the Mughals who kept a watch over the government officials as well as the people of their respective localities, and kept the Centre posted with the latest developments with regard to them; the real origin of the Press as we know it today, lies only later in our history under the East India Company. The pioneer is said to have been one Hickey who started India's first weekly paper under the name of *Bengal Gazette* in 1780. Hickey was followed by others, and soon the papers like *The Calcutta Gazette* and *The Indian World* were established. But these papers were not meant for the Indians or to bring about any awakening in them. They were published in English, edited by Englishmen and meant only for the English readers. Instead of studying the Indian conditions and life to educate the English on the subjects they published lengthy extracts from the journals of England and other countries of Europe as if their purpose was to keep the Indian readers well posted with the news only of that part of the world. These papers, however, also published sometimes very bold comments on the Indian Government and its policies.

Managed by the English, these papers had a considerable liberty. But Warren Hastings in whose time Press was founded was not a man of liberal views, and they were soon made to feel that they could not remain entirely unbridled. Hickey, for instance, who considered "the liberty of the Press to be essential to the very existence of an Englishman and a free Government," as he himself wrote, went perhaps too far in his liberal views, and published libels on Mrs Hastings and forwarded a criticism of Hastings' policies in India. And he was soon made to taste the blow of Hasting's sword. His journal was suspended, and he was imprisoned. Thus, the *Bengal Gazette* starting in 1780 was closed in 1782. Nor was Cornwallis the successor of Warren Hastings any better. Duane, the editor of *The Indian World*, was likewise punished by him and deported to Europe. Sir John Shore, the successor of Cornwallis, censured Makenly, the editor of *The Telegraph* in 1796 for publishing certain criticism of the working of some Government officials. And *The Calcutta Gazette* having published certain communications between the French Republic and the Court of Directors in the same year, was reprimanded in the same way.

Thus right from its inception the Press had to face challenges which raised the very question of its life and death. The more serious trial for the Press, however, came in the time of Lord Wellesley when for the first time in its history regular Press Laws were

formulated. Wellesley, a man of strong and imperious disposition, on his arrival in India found the British peace threatened from all sides. The French danger in India was becoming real when Tippu Sultan was supposed to be in communication with them. The Marathas were developing ambitions, and the Nizam was feeling restive against the British. Under these circumstances Wellesley saw a danger in the liberty of Press which according to him could spoil the atmosphere yet further by its irresponsible comments.

He, therefore, issued five Regulations in 1799 to bring the Press under a regular control. And these were about the first definite Regulations in this respect. Under these Regulations a definite censorship on all the papers was established, the proprietors and the editors of the papers had to give their names on their papers, they were not to publish news regarding the war in Europe, the facts regarding which could go to the people only through the Government, no paper was to be published on the sabbath day, and any trespass of the Regulations was to result in an immediate deportation to Europe. Charles Maclean, the editor of *The Bengal Harkaru*, who was said by Wellesley to have done "animadverting, through the medium of a public print upon the proceedings of a court of justice, and of censuring the conduct of a public officer for acts done in his official capacity," was actually deported to England for the crime. Thompson writes regarding Wellesley: "journalists had leave to write what he approved; if they wrote otherwise they left India."<sup>1</sup>

Charles Maclean, however, was a lover of liberty, and on his deportation to England he used the power of his pen against Wellesley's high-handed and aggressive policy in India. And this ultimately led to Wellesley resigning his high office in this country.

Lord Minto continued the policy of Wellesley, but his successor Lord Hastings was a liberal and supporter of the independence of the Press. He abolished all censorship on the Press despite the opposition of some British authorities. But he took certain precautionary steps lest the Press should grow irresponsible, and issued some new regulations in 1818 which required of the Press not to publish any objectionable and offensive matter in connection with the public conduct of the officials such as the Governor-General, the Members of Council, the Judges and the Bishop of Calcutta. Nor were they to publish obnoxious reports regarding the political transactions of the Indian Government in this country, or its proceedings in England. They would not publish or discuss anything regarding British interference in Indian religion, nor publish private scandal or "personal remarks on individuals tending to excite dissensions in society." And they would not publish anything pertaining to the above as an extract from some European journal either.

1. Thompson, *Lord Metcalfe*, p. 317.

The liberal policy of Lord Hastings leading to the abolition of censorship, etc. led to the more active development of the Press in India. During his time some new newspapers and journals, some in vernaculars, appeared. Among these were the *Samachar Darpan* and *Sambad Kaumudi* in vernaculars, and the *Calcutta Journal* in English. The last named paper was founded in 1818 by J.S. Buckingham, a bold and enterprising journalist who spared none from his critical pen; even the High officials like the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, the Governor of Madras and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court became subject of his comment. He therefore had to be deported to England where he gained great fame. But this happened in the year 1823 in the time of Adams, the successor of Lord Hastings, who was rather less liberal in the journalistic liberty during the short time for which he ruled this country.

Under Lord Adams, to arrest the freedom of the Press in India, the Government of India announced the appointment of Sir Thomas Munro to report on the matter. Munro was no lover of the journalistic liberty either, and recommending that the restrictions and censorship on the European journalists be renewed and they be deported to England in case of failure to observe the rules. He reported regarding the Indian Press that, from it, though distant, the danger was "nonetheless there. It would corrupt and disaffect the Indian Army and work for the overthrow of the British power. It will spread among the people the principle of liberty and stimulate them to expel the strangers who rule over them and to establish a national Government."

Working in the light of the report, the Government placed before the Supreme Court in March 1823 a regulation for registration. Under this regulation a prior licence for the publication of a journal or a book was made obligatory. The copies of these publications were to be submitted to the Government for censor, which could stop the circulation of any one of them by a notice in the Government Gazette. The Indian opinion was bound to be aroused against such a regulation, and bitter indignation against the Government was exhibited by leaders like Dwarka Nath Tagore. But nothing came out, and the regulation got its registration on 15 April 1823. Thus, within only a couple of months of Lord Hastings' retirement from India, his liberal policy towards the Press was reversed.

To carry on with the reforming activities of Lord Hastings, roads, canals and bridges were constructed and repaired during his time, communications were improved, Delhi was given a plentiful supply of pure water by opening up of a canal which had fallen into disuse. The city of Calcutta was beautified. "In short," as Bladensburg comments, "his administration marks an epoch in the internal development of the country when the finances were put in order, when India was brought more closely within the fold of the national

family, and when the foundations of domestic reform were laid."<sup>1</sup>

### FOREIGN RELATIONS

The foreign relations of Hastings deserve but only a passing reference. In the East despite the provocative attitude of Burma, Hastings was able to maintain friendly relations with that country. Ceylon, it would be important to note, was completely subjugated with the help of the Indian troops about the year 1818-19. Jawa was restored unconditionally to the Dutch. But when the Dutch taking a wrong advantage tried to exclude all foreign competition from the archipelago, Hastings, in order to strengthen the Far East British possessions and to secure a safe trade-route to China, occupied Singapore which at that time was but a deserted island. Some friction resulted between Holland and England, which continued till 1824 when a treaty was signed by which the respective spheres of influence of the two powers were demarcated.

Pirates had been infesting the Indian shore from the Konkan to Cutch since time immemorial. In 1819-20 some special expeditions were fitted out, and by 1822 the predatory fleets disturbing India's coastal peace were completely suppressed.

Within India, friendly relations with Ranjit Singh continued. There were certain troubles with the Amirs of Sind, but they were removed. Cutch, from where repeated raids were carried out into the protected territories of the British was becoming a problem. It was subjugated by 1822 when it was incorporated into the territories of British India and placed under the control of the Central Government.

There was, however, one unfortunate incident during the reign of Hastings which ultimately compelled him to resign. This related to a firm named William Palmer & Co. which advanced some loans to the Nizam with the sanction of the Governor-General. There was, however, some question whether the dealings of this financial house formed an exception to those which an Act of Parliament passed in 1796 had been framed to prohibit. In giving sanction to the financial house, Hastings had relied altogether upon the judgement of the former Resident in that state. The Directors who had already been opposed to Hastings' policy in India, took this opportunity, and although no direct accusation was made, indirectly they charged that the Governor-General had been influenced by personal motives in granting the above sanction. Being deeply sensitive, Hastings could not tolerate this and resigned his high office in 1821, though he still carried on his functions till 1 January 1823.

And thus ended an epoch in the Indian history The writer of

1 Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

the present work need not apologize for quoting in full a brilliant summary of the achievements of Hastings drawn up by Ross-Bladensburg in his remarkable book *Marquess of Hastings*. He writes : When Hastings "reached Calcutta, English possessions were disjointed and fragmentary, long frontiers had to be guarded and maintained, communications between the parts were uncertain and difficult, rapid access to many of the provinces impossible. These territories were in contact with turbulent and hostile neighbours, and were exposed to the desolating effects of unchecked violence, and to the ruin and misery caused by inroads of predatory hordes." The Maratha communities were in a state of anarchy, their rule was one of devastation, it was continually destroying and never repairing. The numerous bands of freebooters and mercenary troops that infested the country crushed the inhabitants, sorely embarrassed government within the Company's borders. Development was checked, peace was precarious, and the stability of British authority was in imminent peril of being overturned and annihilated.

"All this was changed by the Marquess of Hastings. The hostility of Nepal was overcome, and the northern frontier was secured. The Maratha combination against British rule and the predatory system which threatened the Company's territories were annihilated. Central India was settled and pacified. In a word, the independent native states who conceived in 1813 that they could expel the English from India were defeated, and in 1823 every prince in that vast region up to the Sutlej was brought into subjection to the Government of Calcutta."<sup>1</sup>

The territorial adjustments of the conquered lands were also made in a brilliant manner. And in his administrative activities, Hastings deserves all our appreciation for efforts to secure the rights of the tenants as against *zamindars*, pacification of conquered territories and betterment of the prospects of the Indians in the judicial service of the Company. Roberts writes : "He was an able administrator, a hard and conscientious worker, a good judge of men, and his name and fame deservedly rank only just below the greatest in the roll of Governors-General."<sup>2</sup>

### SUBJUGATION OF THE MARATHAS

"The year 1818 marks the downfall of a new empire in India," writes Barton, "the British could no longer avoid the responsibilities of the paramount power. They now decided to sweep away the sovereignty of the Peshwa and to annex his dominions."<sup>3</sup> And before closing this chapter, it would be interesting to study the causes of the downfall of this great empire which obviously forms

1. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-17.
2. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
3. Barton, *The Princes of India*, p. 240.



the most important extent of the reign of Lord Hastings.

"The fact of progress," writes Fisher "is written plain and large on the page of history, but progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by another."<sup>1</sup> And this is what happened with the Marathas. There was a time when the Marathas were the greatest power in India. Their control extended far and wide, and even the Mughal Emperor at Delhi had to acknowledge their supremacy. The hopes of the establishment of a Hindu empire in India rose high. But suddenly the circumstances changed, and the hopes were dashed to the ground. The Maratha power began to decline, and although at the time of the Third Anglo-Maratha War the Maratha power and influence still extended on large tracts of this country, they were weak, and were defeated.

One of the most important causes of their downfall was the vastness of their empire itself, which no single Maratha was able to administer and control. After the death of Shivaji the Peshwa went on gathering power, but the time came when that power became unwieldy. The Maratha territories were divided: Holkar, Bhonsla, Sindhia and Gaekwad established independent principalities which in the beginning acknowledged the Peshwa's supremacy, but began later to assert their independence. The Peshwa became impotent, the confederates became ambitious; mutual jealousies, intrigues and scramble for power became the order of the day. And even the so-called best among the Maratha leaders such as Baji Rao I, Malhar Rao, Mahadji Sindhia, Nana Phadnis and others started indulging in these games. They wasted their power and energy in mutual squabbles, they could not come together even at the time of the most serious emergency, and therefore they were weak, and when the storm of the British invasions came, they were blown away like loose pieces of straw.

If the Maratha princes had no peace in their external relations, they had the least of it in their internal affairs. Their administration was corrupt and inefficient. Bribery, jobbery and falsehood prevailed. The peasants were oppressed, and revenue-realisation was the only connecting link between the rulers and the ruled. There was no law and order in the land. Justice was delayed and sold. The people starved, while the government officers and zamindars revelled in luxuries.

The Marathas had no well-organised financial system. Their lands were sterile, and rainfall scanty. Plunders and *chauth* were their best sources of income. The system of *chauth* had been started

1. Fisher, *History of Europe*, p. 223.



in the time of Shivaji, and Dr Sen<sup>1</sup> writes that it was a sort of contribution exacted by a military leader. According to Ranade<sup>2</sup>, it was realised for a protection against a third party invasion, and could best be compared with Wellesley's subsidiary system. While Sir Jadu Nath Sirkar<sup>3</sup> asserts that it merely saved a place from the unwelcome presence of the Maratha soldiers and civil underlings, but did not impose on Shivaji any corresponding obligation to guard the district from foreign invasion or any internal disorder. Whatever be the exact implication of this system, it is obvious that it was realised from the territories controlled by others, and in a manner that nobody with self-respect could welcome. It was indeed these activities of the Marathas against the Rajputs which pushed the latter under the British protection. And yet more, these two sources too could not last for long. As the times of peace came, the plunder as a source of income dried up. And as the Maratha empire expanded, comparatively fewer territories were now left out which could be subjected to *chauth*. Nothing was done for an improvement of agriculture, or for an improvement and development of industries. And when the security of life and property existed the least, there could be no prospects of the expansion of trade and commerce. Little wonder therefore that the Maratha rulers had to face serious financial difficulties. While they could have enough for their own luxurious lives, their sources were insufficient to meet the salary bills of servants and soldiers. They borrowed money from the bankers, as did Mahadji Sindhia one of the best and most famous chiefs in his palmy days. The bankers demanded payment, and the confusion became worse confounded. One can very easily imagine, how long such a government could last.

In fact there is little wonder that in such circumstances Hastings was able to write to the Court of Directors on 20 June 1818 : "The inhabitants are well aware of the comfort and security enjoyed by the subjects in the adjoining territories of the Honourable Company; and indeed they have given every demonstration of eagerly anticipating an arrangement attended with no regrets to counter-balance their presumption in its favour."<sup>4</sup>

And then, the Maratha population was heterogeneous and divided into a number of castes and clans. Brahmins hated non-Brahmins, and *vice versa*. The Brahmins themselves were sub-divided into Desh, Konkan, Chitpavan, etc. And there were mutual quarrels among them. Rabindranath Tagore writes : "Shivaji aimed at preserving the old order; he wished to save...a Hindu society to

1. Sen, S.N., *The Administrative System of the Marathas*.
2. Ranade, M.G., *Rise of the Maratha Power*.
3. Sirkar, Sir J.N., *Shivaji and His Times*.
4. Bladensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

which ceremonial distinctions and isolation of castes are the very breath of life. He wanted to mark this heterogeneous society triumphant all over India. He wove ropes of sand."

The Maratha rulers made no efforts to cultivate arts of peace and civilization among their people. Nothing was done for the improvement of community life. No effort was made to spread education among the people and make them enlightened and free from prejudices and superstition. And, therefore, as Sir Jadu Nath may be quoted, the "cohesion of the people, in the Maratha State was not organic but artificial, accidental, and therefore precarious... dependent upon rulers' extraordinary personality."<sup>1</sup> Based upon orthodoxy, Rabindranath Tagore writes, a "temporary enthusiasm sweeps over the country and we imagine that it has been united."

The greatest achievements of the Marathas were those which they were able to get by their guerrilla methods of warfare. But such methods could suit them only when they played a defensive game, and when they had to remain within their small territories protected by hills and forests. As the Maratha power developed and they grew into an empire, the old methods of warfare became dated. The times had now changed, they had to fight on the offensive and face pitched battles. But the Marathas themselves did not change with the changing times. They made no serious efforts to learn different arts of war, nor did they try to have a perfect discipline in their forces. Balaji introduced a large number of mercenaries in his army and tried to Westernise his system. But the efforts were so half-hearted and inefficient that his soldiers could not learn the new arts, while they forgot the practice of the old. There was so much indiscipline in the Maratha armies, that their generals grew ambitious and disobedient. The state of affairs can best be described if we hand over our pen for a short while to Sadashiv Dinkar.

Sadashiv Dinkar, an agent of Nana Phadnis, wrote to him regarding the conditions existing in the army to Mahadji Sindhia, one of the best Maratha chiefs, at Mathura in 1788 when that chief was in his best days. He observed : "Mahadji has just obtained ten lacs, but you will be surprised to learn how the money had been spent. As for his army expenditure, the Maratha forces from the Deccan have been suffering appalling miseries which I am unable to describe in words. They are not able to pay off their debts even by selling their horses. A trooper hardly gets Rs 10 a month; how can he live on this? Mahadji has spent tremendously on his new regiments of infantry, but his eminent Maratha assistants, who laid down their lives in capturing Gohad and Gwalior, have suffered terrible destitution. Mahadji never enquires if all the men put down on paper in

1. Sircar, J.N., *Shivaji and His Times*, pp. 429-32.

the roll of the infantry regiments are really present or not. There is no inspection, no roll-call and the vast amounts spent on them do not reach the hands of the men to whom they are due, but the money is pocketed by unscrupulous middlemen. There is enormous confusion and misappropriation."

G.S. Sardesai writes : "Nation's liberty can be preserved only by efficient armies, i.e. armies composed of well trained soldiers, equipped with up-to-date arms and led by efficient officers."<sup>1</sup> But none of these existed among the Marathas.

Nor was the Maratha artillery in any way better. They did not manufacture their own guns. They were imported, and their supply often failed. And then, this branch of service was maintained only with the help of the foreign officers; the Marathas never trained their own men in any considerable number for the purpose.

The Marathas had no efficient spy system. They worked merely on the basis of guess work. And they were not only poor students of diplomacy, they were also poor in the case of geography. While making military movements, no efforts were made to gather geographical information in time. And therefore, often while moving onwards, or while fleeing before the enemy, they suddenly came across a river, and then they would send their men desperately to discover some fords, or gather some boats. And in the meanwhile, the enemy would gain the best position, and the Marathas would lose a battle even before fighting it; or while fleeing, would be overtaken and slaughtered.

Opposed to these were the British who had come all the way from England to establish an empire in India. They had a previous experience not only in many European wars, but also in many Indian ones. Whatever they did, they did in a planned manner. No step was taken blindly. Everything was thoroughly discussed and debated upon, before it was taken up. The net-work of their spies spread far and wide. They mastered the Indian languages to deal with the Indians in a perfect manner. They mastered Indian geography before they made any military movement in any part of the country. Nothing was left to chance and guess work. There is no doubt that they were much more advanced in science, and we might agree to a certain extent with the views of Rajwade who writes : "If any of the Maratha troopers accompanying the Peshwa Bajirao II in his flight before the British regiments of General Smith and others during the early months of 1818, were asked why he ran away and what particular fright had seized him, he would have unhesitatingly answered that he was not at all afraid of the white biped, but of the powerful long range guns which he handled and the superior scientific equipment

1. Sardesai, G.S., *op. cit.*, p. 177.

that he possessed in the art of conducting war. "But this definitely was not the whole reason for the failure of the Marathas and the success of the British. More important than their superior scientific equipment was their discipline in the army. The battles such as that of Kirki and Koregaon prove this. And it would not be an exaggeration to say that even if they did not have the superiority in science that they possessed, they should definitely have won the war against the Marathas, again, because they had discipline in their ranks.

A Maratha soldier once defeated might know that he had his home and land in his village which awaited him, and he could at any time go back and settle down as a peaceful citizen. But for a British soldier or officer the things were different. They had to win battles, which if they lost they would get no place where they could hide their heads and save their lives. For them it was a game of victory or death. And therefore they were courageous and fought against heavy odds, and won.

"One serious drawback of eastern policy was the disastrous principle of hereditary service and occupation, which regulated the affairs of both the State and individual life in our society," writes G.S. Sardesai. And again: "When a child of 40 days, Madhavrao II was invested with the office of the Peshwa, the result was disastrous."<sup>1</sup> Opposed to the Marathas was the British system which was not based on individuals, but on an organisation. Only the best available man was appointed as the Governor-General, and once so appointed one had to give the best account of himself or be removed. Among the Marathas imbecile rulers and rulers like a child of 40 days, were tolerated. Because among them the office signified a personal property, while among the English it was nothing but a duty. The consequences were natural.

The Marathas, in fact, lacked discipline and methodism as a race. There was a complete absence among them of the spirit of democracy. Every government official was a dictator within his jurisdiction. The leaders were proud and arrogant. The people were oppressed and least considered. Under these circumstances, little wonder both Hindus and Muslims were dissatisfied, and both sought help from the British.

*Jagirdari* had been revived after the death of Shivaji, and under this system, as it had been the experience throughout the medieval ages, the State was bound to go to the dogs. To every one among the *Jagirdars*, or the fief-holders, his own fief (*Watan*) was the dearest, while love for the father-land (*Patria*) was only a secondary thing. States were thus created within the State, and the national spirit was weakened, which was bound to prove ruinous.

1. Sardesai, G.S., *New History of Marathas*, III, p. 515.

The earlier Maratha leaders were men of better capabilities. Ahalya Bai, Mahadji Sindhia and Nana Phadnis were wiser, and made better use of their resources and circumstances. Mahadji had been able even to bring the Emperor of Delhi under his control. But in the later days of their power the Marathas lost every practical ability. Their leaders like Bajirao II, Jaswant Rao Holkar and Daulat Rao Sindhia were all nincompoops, having no sense of integrity and responsibility. They never considered right time and a right fashion for war. They too believed in trickery and falsehood, as if empires were mere games of jugglery. They frittered away their energy in petty squabbles. They were mere scheming Machiavellis, and no men of action. It was when Sindhia, Holkar and the Peshwa were engaged in one of their internecine wars that the mailed fist of Wellesley fell upon them. The Peshwa was enslaved and the beginning of the end of the Maratha power was made.

As the mutual contests and scramble for power developed, the old schemes of uniting all Hindu chiefs together and establishing a Hindu empire in this country were deliberately given up. And this, because there was no alternative to it. When the Marathas went out plundering, they made no distinctions between friends and foes. And hence all the chiefs and all the people in their surrounding territories were alienated against them. At the time of the Third Battle of Panipat, for instance, which the Marathas fought against Ahmad Shah Abdali, not a single Rajput chief joined them. And the Hindu lords and people in the Gangetic Doab rather rose against them and hindered their progress against the foreign enemy. For this the ruthless plunders by the Marathas in those territories was the cause. Under such circumstances the Marathas could obviously get no support for a Hindu empire.

Then, the nature too does not seem to have been in the favour of the Marathas. Among these causes of their downfall, no less important was the contribution made by the untimely death of many of their more able leaders. When Shivaji died, the Mughal power was brought heavily down upon the Marathas. Bajirao's untimely death saved the Nizam from an almost sure extinction. The death of the Peshwa Madhavrao let loose among the Marathas the latent forces of dissolution, both from within and from without. The death of Madhavrao II in 1795 brought to power the genius of Bajirao II, but for whom the Maratha power might have lasted longer.

Navy among the Marathas was completely neglected in their later days, and this counted a lot when they were fighting against a power which drew its vitality from the high sea. The British had enormous resources at their disposal, both in India and abroad. If the supplies within India failed, they could come from inexhaustible resources outside. And the Marathas, because of their naval incapability, could play no part against that.

And last but not least, the Marathas were unfortunate that they were fighting in 1818 against the English, and not against any other race. Rajwade writes : "An Englishman is a born political animal possessing the glittering polish of a gentleman, but diabolic at heart. Where politics was concerned, he will not respect even his own father.. It was no wonder therefore that with our high talk of spiritual greatness, we went down in a short moment before the Englishmen."<sup>1</sup>

When Hastings retired from India in January 1823, his "public name was high, but his private" finances in a bad shape. Wraxall called him "the Timon of the present age whose chivalrous spirit and magnificent temper have completely exhausted a splendid fortune."<sup>2</sup> He was appointed Governor of Malta where he spent his last days. In 1826 he severely injured himself by falling from his horse. "He was taken for a cruise on H.M.S. *Revenge*, and in the Bay of Naples he died on 28 November 1826, being almost seventy-two years old."

"Tall, upstanding, strong and athletic with very thick, black whiskers, Hastings was called the ugliest man in England. But this was balanced by his genial and affable manner...In India he left his mark as an honest and effective ruler."<sup>3</sup>

1. Nandkarni, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-84.

2. Mersey, Viscount, *The Viceroys and Governors-General of India*, p. 45.

3. *ibid*,

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### Lord Amherst, 1823-1828

Hastings was succeeded by John Adams, a senior member of the Calcutta Council who ruled as Governor-General for seven months before the arrival of Lord Amherst. During his short period, Adams settled the affairs of the Palmer & Co., which was ordered not to lend any more money to the Nizam and a payment was ordered to the Nizam to clear off his debt to the Company. Before Adams was replaced, he earned notoriety for his strict censorship of press. Buckingham, the editor of *The Calcutta Journal*, was deported for having criticised the Government. Luckily Adam's rule did not last for long. Amherst replaced him in 1823.

Born in 1773 with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth, and in a family which enjoyed high political contacts, Amherst was one of those favoured children of destiny who do not have to develop a very strong will and an iron determination to make success kiss their feet. Amherst as a child had the capacity to direct his talent and energy in a definite direction, and favoured by his circumstances his rise in life was easy. In 1797 he took his M.A. degree at the Christ Church Collège, Oxford and immediately after that he started on a grand continental tour, as it was the wont of the day for the children of those who were men of means. In 1800 he married a lady of his choice, who was a widow, and settled to a happy married life. He was sent as an Ambassador Extraordinary to Sicily in 1809. In 1815 he was made Privy Councillor and shortly afterwards was sent to China as England's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, which was an important job, and in which he acquitted himself creditably well. In 1823 he was appointed Governor-General of India, and landed at Calcutta with Lady Amherst on 1 August 1823.

India at the time of Amherst's arrival was a great British empire, where opponents after opponents had been destroyed, and where now John Bull had settled down as a great sovereign ruler with an unchallengeable authority and an unconquerable might. Twenty years before Amherst arrived, Lake had brought the great North West Provinces under the East India Company's rule, and made

British officers the guardians of the Delhi Emperor. Wellesley conquered the districts of the Madras Presidency, and Lord Hastings brought those of the Bombay Presidency under the Company's sway. "The rest of India east of the Sutlej and the Indus valley was, if we except the territories of Nepal and Burma, etc., in a relation of subsidiary dependence. Throughout Rajputana, Malwa, Gujarat, Oudh, Bundelkhand, Indore, Bhopal, Berar, Hyderabad, Mysore, and Travancore, the Company spoke through its Residents or other agents with commanding authority."

The disposition of the new Governor-General appeared to mark him out for the role of a peace minister.<sup>1</sup> But he was destined not to enjoy peace in India for long. And when the disposition and the circumstances were counterpoised, the results, as it could be expected of a man of weak will and determination, were painful and tragic in the personal life of Lord Amherst.

### THE FIRST BURMESE WAR, 1824-26

"Almost from the moment when Lord Amherst addressed himself to the duties of his office, the contingency of war with Burma occupied his thoughts."<sup>2</sup>

When the British occupied Bengal, they came into contact with many distant points over which the Burmese monarchs either held sway or claimed sovereignty. Far away in the north, in their outlandish district of Rangpur, the great valley of Assam was visible, which the British looked at with curiosity, and perhaps covetousness. Towards the south, the Sylhet district of the British marched with Cachar. Chittagong was the farthest British outpost on the seaboard of Bengal, and from here stretched southwards along the coast what was once the famous kingdom of Arakan.

There were several factors which led to the trouble between the Burmese and the British. It was towards the close of the 18th century that the ruling Burmese monarch sent an army and occupied Arakan, thus putting an end to what was once a glorious kingdom. Not a few of the people of Arakan, however, animated by the spirit of nationalism, got disaffected under the Burmese misrule, and began to cross the Naf estuary, the boundary between the British district of Chittagong and Arakan, on to the British territories. Some of them establishing on the frontier, began to make incursions into their homeland. A band of these marauders were pursued by a Burmese force which violated the British territory and began to demand the surrender of the fugitives. Sir John Shore proved to be a man of cool temper, and instead of moving to anger he struck a

1. Hunter, W.W. (Ed.) *Lord Amherst*, p. 25.

2. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 66.



compromise with the offending forces agreeing to surrender the fugitives if the Burmese first withdrew. We do not completely understand W.W. Hunter's opinion that this was done on "high moral grounds," but there is no doubt, as he agrees, that it caused a considerable injury to the British prestige. Later on Captain Symes was despatched to Ava on a friendly mission, but this too failed in correcting the impression of the British weakness that Shore had exhibited.

This encouraged the Burmese. The waves of migration of the fugitives into Chittagong increased. The armed Burmese forces pursued them and violated the British borders again. A British force was sent to dislodge them, but was repulsed. This happened in the time of Wellesley, who seemed too busy in wars elsewhere to take notice either of insult or of a reverse. But he did decide to put the British authority in the right by making an arrangement for settling the fugitives in large industrial communities. This increased the bitterness between the British and Burmese. On the one hand was the piteous plea of the fugitives that "we will never return to the Arakan; if you choose, you may slaughter us here," while on the other hand was the assertion of the Burmese king : "If you in your country, give refuge to my slaves, the broad path of intercourse between the states will be blocked."

Another factor further embittering the relations appeared in 1811, when among the suffering fugitives appeared one Khyenbyan, or King-bering as the Anglo-Indians called him. He was the son of a district officer in Arakan, and had betrayed his country to the Burmese because of which he became very unpopular amongst his countrymen. To free himself from the stigma he joined the fugitives in the British territories, organised them into a fighting force and invaded Arakan, capturing its chief town. The king of Arakan held the British responsible for all this, but the Calcutta authorities professing innocence, sent Captain Canning to smooth away the king's displeasure. Canning's mission however failed, and he had to plan an escape from detention as a hostage. This was the last British pacific approach in communication with the King of Ava.

Shortly after, a strong Burmese force came and King-bering was swept back into Chittagong. Here now followed a triangular warfare; the poor King-bering being hunted with equal zeal both by the levies from Arakan and by the British. And this continued troubling the Anglo-Burmese border till 1815 when King-bering died. This left the Burmese king yet more emboldened and with greater possibility of a serious clash with the East India Company.

In 1817 the British received an intimation from the Burmese king saying that all the fugitives from Arakan should be sent back forthwith, failing which "the Lord of Seas and Earth," as the King called himself, would reassert his authority over the places such as Dacca,

Chittagong, Kossimbazar and Murshidabad which undoubtedly belonged to the Arakan Crown. The British reply was simple, yet strong. And they refused to satisfy the wishes of the "Lord of Seas and Earth," leaving him to do what he would. The King, however, died in 1819, leaving behind a situation, yet more dangerous.

The third factor appeared when the next Burmese king sent an army into Assam, deposed its king and handed over the throne to a kinsman of his own. The Assamese king was exiled to Bhutan where, after some hard efforts, he was able to arrange the things and re-occupy Assam. But his success was only short-lived. He was obliged to flee again, and this time towards the adjacent British district. The situation became really serious when the commander of the Burmese forces began to threaten a march into the British territories to capture the royal refugee.

The next factor appeared just before the arrival of Amherst. By a treaty signed earlier the British had taken the Raja of Manipur under their protection, and tried to help him against Burma, in which however they did not find much success. Just before the arrival of Amherst in India, "we find the Burmese advancing into Cachar with the intention of dealing with certain Manipuri princes who, driven out of their own country, had taken up their quarters there. But they had been anticipated by the extension to the region of British protection. Again the demand for the surrender of fugitives was preferred, and again it was met with a decisive refusal, and so, when the year 1823 closed a Burmese host was hanging menacingly on the Sylhet frontier."<sup>1</sup> They had conquered Siam in 1822, which added to their pride, and they had developed the belief that no troops could stand their might.

The first serious collision occurred on 17 January 1824 when about 4,000 Burmese and Assamese crossed the mountains from Assam and took up an entrenched position at Bikrampur, about 45 miles east of Sylhet. Another force, flushed with a victory over the local inhabitants, advanced from Manipur.

Lord Amherst, as already indicated, was a man of peaceful disposition, and although he did declare a war against Burma, his proceedings were vague, and attitude leisurely and indecisive. Neither the preparations for the war were adequate, nor the instructions to the subordinates precise. The conduct of war therefore was not efficient. The British failed in taking an initiative, and although ultimately the Burmese were defeated, the war was prolonged, in which in the initial stages the British faced many reverses, and in which the amount of expenditure involved was crushingly heavy. It cost the British 15 million, and as their total revenue for the year

1. Hunter, W.W., *op. cit.*, p. 76.

1822-23 was little more than 23 million, it is obvious how great a financial disorder should have been caused by the war.

For all this, however, it would be too much of an injustice to blame Lord Amherst alone. Sitting thousands of miles away, the Directors of the East India Company interfered unnecessarily in a matter which a man on the spot alone could understand. Right in the beginning they declared the war to be unnecessary, and there was a lot of loose talk about Lord Amherst's recall even before the war ended. The Damocles' sword therefore hung over his head, and although we might blame Amherst for having failed in taking a bold stand and giving a better impression of himself to his masters, we cannot exactly say how much better even a man of an iron determination would have accomplished under such circumstances.

*The Treaty of Yandaboo.* The war ended in 1826 when the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed between the Governments of Burma and India. Under this Treaty an indemnity of one million was imposed upon Burma. Burma agreed to have a British Resident at Ava at her own cost. The provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim were handed over to the Company. The Burmese forces had to be withdrawn from Cachar and Assam, and Burma recognised the independence of Manipur. A commercial treaty was also signed in which the British secured many commercial rights, which all, however, were dressed in an ambiguous language and frivolous terms, and which proved to be a source of conflict later on. The greatest gain of the East India Company, however, was that the first Burmese war developed closer British interests in Burma, and it proved to be the first step towards the complete conquest of that country.

### THE INDIAN STATES UNDER AMHERST

Lord Amherst's policy towards the Indian States was not aggressive. His best interest seems to have been to maintain the *status quo*, which sometimes entailed a military action, the results of which however, always went to his favour.

*Kittur :* The early British failure in the Burmese war encouraged many among the Indian States to assert their independence of the East India Company. And one such incident occurred in 1824 in Kittur, a petty state in the South Maratha country. Its chief died without leaving a son to succeed. The widow adopted one, the validity of which however was not recognised by the collector of the district. The Government of Bombay instructed the collector to hold an enquiry, and in the meanwhile to assume the charge of the government and the treasury. The things proceeded well for some time, till one day some British officers were opposed in their efforts to enter the fort for the routine affairs. This resulted in the murder

of some of them which stunned the high British authorities to action. Soon a strong British force appeared and secured the surrender of the ringleaders, thereby re-establishing peace in the troubled state.

*Kolhapur.* Another trouble occurred in Kolhapur where the young Raja of the state claimed certain territories under the grant of the Peshwa, which had for sometime been in the possession of the brother-in-law of Sindhia. Sindhia protested to Kolhapur, while the Bombay Government looked on quietly. But when this policy failed and a Kolhapur force marched and occupied the claimed lands, a British force was sent to set the things right. The fort was occupied, and the Raja was "compelled to restore the lands he had plundered, to receive British garrisons, to see his powers of rule seriously restricted, and, hardest of all, to promise good behaviour in future. The odd thing is that on the whole he kept his word."<sup>1</sup>

*Cutch.* There was a minor trouble in Cutch as well, some of the chiefs of which being expelled from there, entered Sind. The Amirs of Sind received them well and also rendered them some military assistance with which they attacked Cutch. The attack however was repelled and the British garrison at Cutch was strengthened.

*The Capture of Bharatpur.* The most important event in Lord Amherst's relations with the Indian states, however, was his capture of Bharatpur where a usurper created serious trouble and also began to communicate with Alwar and Jaipur to overthrow the British rule.

Early in 1825 Raja Baldev Singh of Bharatpur died leaving behind his six year old son Balwant Singh who, in 1824, had been invested by Sir David Ochterlony, the British Political Agent at Delhi, with a *khilat*—a ceremonial dress "generally understood to be a recognition of the right to succeed." The lad duly succeeded, and at first there seemed to be absolutely no sign of opposition. Only a few weeks later, however, the trouble arose, when Durjan Sal, the son of Baldev Singh's younger brother, after securing the support of the army, attacked the citadel, killed the agent, and proclaimed himself the ruler.

As lady Amherst writes : "Immediately after this development, David Ochterlony collected all the troops in the neighbourhood, and issued proclamation in which he sadly compromised the Government, and began putting his troops in order, to advance to the hitherto impregnable fortress of Bharatpur. These measures met with the unanimous disapprobation of the Government, who ordered him to recall his proclamation and stop the advance of troops." There were two reasons for the objection of the Government to Ochterlony's

1. Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-2.

action. Firstly, the fortress of Bharatpur had been known for its impregnability, which even a great general like Lake had not been able to reduce. And secondly, the Directors had already been dissatisfied with Lord Amherst's conduct of war against Burma, and they were not likely to approve of another such war which might seriously compromise the British prestige in India.

The Government not only therefore disapproved of Ochterlony's action, they also decided to retire him from active employment. Ochterlony already on a former occasion had requested to be retired from active duty, this was taken advantage of and Metcalfe was sent to succeed him. However, before Metcalfe reached to take charge from Ochterlony, the latter died in July 1825 to be relieved of his sorrows and humiliation.

The proclamation issued by Ochterlony, however, whether right or wrong, had already hit the mark. It had been issued to the people, asking them not to submit to the illegal action of Durjan Sal and promising help for the lawful sovereign. As a result of it the life of the young Raja was spared by Durjan Sal, who also declared that he had taken the action for the good of the Raja himself and that he having no desire to assume sovereignty, would act only as the regent of the Raja during his minority. When Metcalfe took charge of the affairs, he therefore had to reconcile Ochterlony's action, and was able ultimately to persuade the Governor-General to interfere in Bharatpur. On 16 September a resolution was passed in favour of this policy, and it was declared that "the existing disturbance at Bharatpur, if not speedily quietened, will produce general commotion in Upper India." The resolution also authorised Metcalfe to maintain "rightful heir by expostulation and resort to measure of force."

The force was prepared, and as expostulations failed and Durjan Sal refused to surrender, the attack was delivered. The famous citadel was besieged. The town suffered from a heavy destruction, and the wonderful feat was performed when the citadel surrendered. Durjan Sal was taken a state prisoner and sent away to Allahabad. On 20 January 1826 Lord Combermere, the Commander-in-Chief, and Metcalfe, held a Darbar in the citadel and seated the lad, Balwant Singh, on the *Musnad*. His mother was appointed as his personal guardian, and a British Resident was appointed to control the affairs. Hunter writes: "The fortifications which had so long been the despair of our strategies and hope of our enemies were dismantled."

"The siege of Bharatpur was an episode so stirring and splendid in itself that it seems superfluous to inquire as to its historical significance." Firstly, it extended *Pax Britannica* right to the Indus. Secondly, the British right to maintain peace and order all over the country was established and recognised. And thirdly, after the

brilliant success against the Marathas, this event conclusively established the British supremacy in Northern India.

*Alwar.* The chief of Alwar had also been trying to create troubles. After the capture of Bharatpur some papers had fallen to the British hands which proved that Durjan Sal had been in communication with Alwar, and that the latter was about to assist him against the British. The fall of the Bharatpur stronghold, however, had so wholesome an effect on Alwar that the chief hurriedly submitted on the approach of the victorious British army.

### THE MUTINY AT BARRACKPUR

The Mutiny of the Indian Sepoys at Barrackpur was one of the saddest episodes in the time of Lord Amherst. There were several reasons for this which had been piling up the combustible material. No heed, however, was paid in time, and the pile ultimately burst into fire. The most important reason was the serious strain caused by the Burmese war on the Government resources. According to the terms of their service, the sepoy had to arrange the transport of their own personal baggage which was generally heavy because each sepoy had to carry his own utensils and other such belongings. Since the requirements of the Government were more urgent, and they could pay a heavier price for the purpose, they swept lower Bengal of most of its available beasts of burden. For whatever of these beasts remained, their owners demanded a heavy price, which the sepoy could ill-afford to pay. The Government, however, insisted on the terms of service. Nor was it possible to take the sepoy by sea, in which their caste scruples intervened.

The early failure of the British against the Burmese at Ramu was also magnified, and the sepoy was slowly learning to free themselves from the effect of the British magic of superiority. They had moreover, gained grand successes against the Pindaris and the Marathas for the British, and for this reason the Bengal soldiers had of late been treated with indulgence, which strengthened in them a sense of pride and grudge against their rulers.

Then there was the superstitious belief slowly gaining ground amongst these sepoy that the Burmese king possessed magical powers and was invulnerable. The innate horror against fighting beyond the familiar bounds of India also weighed heavily with these soldiers. The recent measures of reorganisation introduced into the Indian army had broken up the old regimental system, and the new officers under whom the battalions were placed were ignorant of their men's nature and beliefs, and hence were incapable of winning their confidence.

Besides, there was not only a serious shortage of beasts of burden, there was also a shortage of carriers, drivers and camp

followers. In order to induce them to serve, these common coolies had to be given higher pay than the high caste soldiers, which the latter naturally grudged. Although some of the regimental officers realised the difficulty, the strait-laced officialdom at the headquarters refused to move.

And then, just at this time, writes Hunter, "came the crisis which would have tried the most confirmed loyalty." The sickness at Arakan was rife to such an extent that there were justifications for the sepoys to call it the region of plague. The military administration was known for its carelessness about the sanitary and medical arrangements for the sepoys, and they shrank, therefore, from proceeding to Arakan.<sup>1</sup>

The matter was precipitated on 31 October 1824 when the sepoys of the 47th Native Infantry refused to march unless their pay was enhanced. And they also declared their resolve to resist their officers. This happened at Barrackpur, a place about sixteen miles above Calcutta, on the Hugli, where in a great mansion the Governor-General had retired from the dust and noise of the capital. Gen. Dalzell immediately informed the Governor-General. During the night about 200 sepoys of the 62nd Regiment of the Native Infantry, and 30 of the 26th Regiment, also joined them and the mutiny took a serious turn.

The situation, however, was not very difficult for the authorities to handle. And Lady Amherst explains : "The cannon from Dum-Dum was stationed in the park to fire...on the insurgents if necessary. Captain Macan and two other officers were sent to them. He addressed the mutineers in their own language in a very conciliatory manner...No arguments availed. Their ringleaders laughed at him, and on his report to the Commander-in-Chief the fatal signal was given...Cannon fired several volleys...as did the musketry..."<sup>2</sup> Many fled instantly, 4 or 5 of them were killed or wounded, while several hundreds were taken prisoners. Court-martial was immediately set up. Six of the ringleaders were hanged the next morning. Several hundred were later found guilty and were sentenced to death. The death sentence, however, later on was commuted to hard labour for 14 years. On learning from the sepoys that Indian officers had instigated them, the latter were dismissed. And the name of the Regiment was effaced from service.

Thus ended the Mutiny of Barrackpur. It seems the sepoys were not led by capable leaders who could understand the strategy of the situation. For the best thing for them was to seize either the Governor-General or the Commander-in-Chief, neither of which was difficult

1. See Hunter, *op. cit.*, 149-50.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-63.



under the situation. And having done this they could have secured any demand.

Soon after the above event, the 39th Native Infantry and the 60th Native Infantry volunteered themselves to go anywhere ordered. Later on these regiments gave a very good account of themselves in Burma, and therefore a free pardon was granted to those condemned to 14 years and they were permitted to go home.

The Barrackpur Mutiny brought Lord Amherst into trouble with the Directors. He was blamed, firstly, for not having sent them the report of the inquiry into the causes of the mutiny immediately; secondly, for not having sent his comments and opinion regarding the correctness or otherwise of the conclusions drawn in the report; and thirdly, for not granting a pardon to the mutineers immediately, which could have secured a greater loyalty of the sepoys. Lord Amherst received a letter from England that he was about to be recalled from the Governor-Generalship. Later on, however, the explanation given by Lord Amherst was able to satisfy the Directors, and the action taken by him and by the Commander-in-Chief was approved.

Lord Amherst is not known for any important administrative achievement in India. The Burmese war and other such troubles brought him a considerable financial derangement. Still, however, the eastern and western Jumna canals engaged his serious attention, though they could not be completed in his time. Moreover, regarding social reforms and suppression of *thuggee* and dacoitee also we read much in the contemporary papers. Lord Amherst made his efforts to deal with savage tribes such as Mers and Bhils. He took a very wise step to reclaim the Mers by raising a battalion of the Mer soldiers, thus setting a thief to catch another thief. The Bhils of Khandesh were also cultivated.

He also took interest in the spread of education in the country, and during his time colleges were opened at Delhi and Agra. The money sanctioned by the Charter Act of 1813 had remained unspent due to the absence of any state policy with regard to education. Lord Amherst set up in 1823 the General Committee of Public Instructions at Calcutta to suggest ways and means for the development of education, and recommend the ways in which to spend one lakh rupees sanctioned in 1813. The sum had to be spent every year, but had been accumulating ever since.

Lord Amherst was an Orientalist, and in continuation of the traditional policy of his predecessors, he founded in 1823 the Sanskrit College at Calcutta. But by this time the situation had changed much, and even some Indian scholars like Raja Rammohun Roy tried to expose the uselessness of such institutions. The Raja thus



wrote a long letter to the Governor-General in 1823, in which he said : "Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus."<sup>1</sup>

The Court Director's Despatch dated 18 February 1824, also came out, for the first time, strongly in favour of Western education, though no decisive suggestion was made in favour of English as the medium of instruction. The General Committee of Public Instructions put up a feeble resistance to this policy of the Directors, but the latter persisted in their views in the subsequent Despatches also, though the Burmese war having intervened, the final decision in this regard had to be postponed till the time of Lord Bentinck.

The reign of Lord Amherst in India represents one of those periods of Indian history when the rulers, under the heaviest clouds, remained sluggish and indecisive. Right from 1825 Lord Amherst laboured through rough waters. The rumours that he was about to be recalled always remained with him. Although the Home Cabinet and the Calcutta Council gave him their support, and in the initial stages the Duke of Wellington also intervened on his behalf, the unfortunate Governor-General always remained under suspense and could never make his mark in any field of activity. Ultimately in August 1826 he decided to resign on account of ill health. In May 1827 he received from the Court of Directors a resolution of thanks and compliments and the resignation which he had already submitted was accepted. In March 1828 Amherst left Calcutta, and thus ended his career as a Governor-General in India.

In England in 1835, Lord Amherst was nominated as Governor-General of Canada. But soon the Whigs came to power, and they cancelled this nomination. His wife died in 1838, and the next year when he was sixty-six, he married another lady, a highly connected rich widow. Amherst lived a long life of retirement, and died on 13 May 1857, when he had reached the ripe age of eighty-four.

1. *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, Part II, p. 35.

### 3

## Lord William Cavendish-Bentinck, 1828-1835

William Cavendish-Bentinck was born in a leading Whig family on 14 September 1774. His father William Henry, third Duke of Portland, had been Prime Minister. His mother, Dorothy Cavendish, was the daughter of the fourth Duke of Devonshire who also had been Prime Minister. Bentinck started his career in the army, being gazetted as ensign in the Coldstream Guards in 1791. In 1794 he was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel; in 1796 he was elected M.P. for Camelford; in 1799 he was sent away to fight against the French and took part in several battles.

Bentinck was only twenty-nine in 1803, when he was appointed Governor of Madras. The same year he having married Mary Acheson who was the daughter of Arthur, the first Earl of Gasford. Bentinck opposed the importation into his province of the permanent settlement, introduced in Bengal in 1793 by Cornwallis. In Bengal a class of zamindars existed with whom this settlement had been made at the cost of the ryots, the tillers of land. But in Madras nothing like the Bengal zamindars was known, and Bentinck was not in favour of recognising anybody as such. He favoured a settlement with the ryots. Bentinck's work in Madras was not over when he was overtaken in 1806 by the Mutiny of the Indian sepoy at Vellore. His commander-in-chief, Sir John Craddock, was said to be mainly responsible for it, but Bentinck was also blamed by the Directors as having shown "a want of prudence and discernment so requisite in administering the government of a numerous and peculiar people."<sup>1</sup> Both he and Craddock were recalled. Bentinck resented this, and demanded that the Directors hold an enquiry to fix the responsibility. Several reasons were forwarded due to which the Mutiny took place, and for all of them Bentinck was not responsible.

Be that as it may, Bentinck returned to England, and shortly after

1. Embree, Ainslie, *Charles Grant*, p. 238.

he was made Major-General and sent away to take part in the Peninsular War. He was sent as envoy to Sicily in 1811 and received his G.L.B. just after the war was over. He had been unemployed for about ten years at Rome when he was appointed Governor-General of Bengal in 1827.

At the time of his assuming charge the Indian administration was suffering from a financial crisis. The Nepalese War, the Third Maratha War and the Burmese War which had been fought under Lord Hastings and Lord Amherst, had seriously shaken the very foundations of the East India Company's financial structure, and it called for some drastic steps to remove the inflated national debt and to replenish the empty treasury. There were several other administrative as well as social problems which required immediate attention.

The period during which Bentinck ruled India, belonged to the age of liberalism in Europe. The French Revolution had occurred, which in its early stages had been hailed in England as the "dawn of a new era." The slogan of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' still rent the air, greatly influenced the English social, literary and political thought, and produced great writers and poets such as Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron, most of whom would agree: "Bliss it was in that age to live, and to be young was the very heaven." The English Parliament was dominated by liberals who caused the great Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 to be passed. The time of the renewal of the Company's Charter also was approaching fast, and the Directors had been convinced that this would not be easy unless a good picture of liberal reforms in India was shown to them.

Moreover, after the downfall of the Marathas the British had realised their importance and responsibility as sovereign rulers of India. And this led them to take a new view of their activities in this country. All this coupled with the liberal character of William Bentinck, brought about a new spirit in the internal administration of India which, as Ramsay Muir writes, "showed itself in two ways, which often came into conflict. On the one hand there was a far more respectful study and appreciation of Indian law and custom than had been shown since the time of Warren Hastings...alongside...was an equally strong conviction that it was the duty of the British Government to introduce into India the best results of Western activities."<sup>1</sup>

There had been barbaric excesses in the Indian affairs before, but now a time had arrived, as Lord Bentinck agreed, when they should

1. Ramsay Muir, *Making of British India*, pp. 277-78.

never again be indulged into. "For the first time," he said, "the blessings of universal tranquillity may be expected." Luckily for India, there was a team of high officials in the country who shared Bentinck's views. The remarkable Minute of 1824 (No. 102) of Munro, the Governor of Madras, clearly shows "that in the view of some of the ablest of British administrators the gradual preparation of the Indian peoples for self-government"<sup>1</sup> was to be the aim. The reforms introduced by Bentinck under this spirit were far reaching, and they truly introduced the British spirit of freedom into Oriental despotism. They may be studied under different headings.

### REFORMS UNDER BENTINCK

*The Financial Reforms.* Shortly after assuming the charge of administration, Lord William Bentinck appointed two committees for enquiring into civil and military expenditures of the Government, and recommend measures for their reduction. The committees held a comprehensive enquiry into the matter, and under their recommendations Bentinck adopted measures to abolish many sinecure jobs and reduce the salaries and allowances of several categories of civil servants.

In military affairs, however, Bentinck failed to accomplish much. The only important financial reform introduced here was the halving of *Bhatta* allowance to the military personnel. *Bhatta* was an allowance given according to status, over and above the regular salary. Directors of the East India Company had previously tried to reduce it, but they had not completely succeeded due to bitter opposition by those who were to be adversely affected. For Bentinck too it was not an easy job to attempt. Yet he took the step and reduced the *Bhatta* by fifty per cent within 400 miles of Calcutta. There was a strong agitation against it as was to be expected, and the Anglo-Indian press hurled open insults and abuses on him. Bentinck however stuck to his decision, and was ultimately able to win his way through.

His judicial reforms and abolition of the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit, as will be discussed later on, also saved him a large amount of money.

His more important financial reform, however, was his regulation of the opium trade. There had been a great demand for opium in China and the Eastern Archipelago. And although it was not a good moral step for a civilised nation to indulge in and encourage the trade of an article such as opium, the British authorities in India had been exploiting this source of revenue, and Bentinck had little compunction in doing so yet more fully and efficiently. Warren Hastings

1. *ibid*, pp. 279-80.

had tried to tap this source. And when Bentinck took up the charge of administration, opium was grown in Benares and Bihar under the monopoly of the East India Company.

Opium was also grown in Malwa, but the British authorities had so far failed to draw any profit therefrom. The reason was that its import into Bombay had been prohibited, and it was therefore carried across Karachi to the Portuguese ports of Daman and Diu. From these ports the Portuguese vessels carried it to the eastern markets and earned enormous profits. What Bentinck did was to permit the conveyance of opium from Malwa direct to the Bombay port. And for this an efficient system of licences was introduced which added by large amounts to the profits of the Government.

Another step taken by Bentinck to replenish his treasury was the resumption of the rent free lands. At the time of acquiring the *Dewani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, the company had confirmed what they considered to be the valid rent free-land grants which individuals and institutions held prior to this. Many of these grants, however, were later on found to be fictitious, and many were so old that the proprietors had lost every documentary and other such solid proofs of their grants to them. A Regulation was passed in 1793 and another in 1819 which authorised the collectors to examine the legality of these grants and resume them if they were not proved to be regular. The proprietors were given the right to bring their appeals to the civil courts. Under these Regulations many grants were thus resumed.

The work, however, was not proceeding satisfactorily, and therefore Bentinck passed the Regulation III of 1828 by which the collectors were made more serious about their job, and special commissioners were appointed to hear appeals from the courts of the collectors. The argument of the proprietors that the grants being very old, they had lost the documentary proofs, was rejected, and thus many were dispossessed of their lands inherited from the ancestors. This added an income of another thirty lakhs of rupees to the Government's coffers. But it was a dearly sought after prize. It caused a great discontentment among the people, which increased under the successors of Bentinck and proved ultimately to be a strong factor leading to the Mutiny of 1857.

Another reform introduced by him belonged to the Land Revenue Settlement of the North-Western Province. This Province had been created out of Oudh and the territories secured from Sindhia. But so far no efficient land revenue settlement had been made which could serve the purpose of the Government as well as encourage the people to employ their heart to agriculture. Lord Wellesley's five years' settlement did not serve the purpose. The period being too short, the people would not venture to improve their lands and

find their additional income robbed away by the enhancement of the rate of land revenue after five years. Bentinck understood their difficulty and consulted the best brains to remove it. Land was surveyed, measured and mapped out, and regular records were prepared. The most important step taken by him was that the settlement was fixed for thirty years, it being made either with a ryot, a zamindar, or a village community. This plan of settlement became a law in 1833.

The arrangement thus made brought about a great advantage to the state as well as to the people. It added to the state revenues and made it easier for the government to draw long term estimates. On the other hand, those employed in agriculture became certain of the state demand for a good number of years, and thus could freely employ themselves in the improvement of their land to enhance their income. Regular registers and records came into existence, and much of the vagueness in the system was removed. The most important defect in the system pointed out however was that the state demand was unusually heavy, though it was conceded that it was a distinct improvement upon that of the old.

Yet another measure which introduced economy was the employment of Indians in the Company's services. As the English education spread, more Indians were available who could replace the English in the Company's service at comparatively cheaper rates. Bentinck took steps, as will be discussed elsewhere, to take advantage of the situation.

The net result of all these financial measures was that instead of a deficit of one million, now a surplus of as much as £ 1½ million appeared in the state budget.<sup>1</sup>

*The Administrative Reforms.* The Charter Act of 1833 passed during the time of Bentinck, declared that "no native of India nor any natural born subject of His Majesty should be disabled from holding any place, office or employment by reason of religion, place of birth, descent or colour." And Bentinck expressed his willingness to work on this principle in the best of his earnestness. Sir Charles Metcalfe commenting on this recommended that Indians should be employed in all the departments in the first instance. Above them should be placed the European superintendents who should combine in themselves all the local powers of a district under them, uniting together the judicature, revenue and police authorities. These should be under Commissioners, who in turn would be under a Board which would communicate with and be "subject to the immediate control of the Government."

Bentinck accepted these recommendations and introduced certain

1. Roberts, P.E., *op. cit.*, pp. 300-5.

changes. Previously no faith had been reposed in the Indians, and it was a determined policy of the Government, as under Lord Cornwallis, to employ only Europeans in the state services. But the Europeans had proved too expensive. Moreover, as we have already mentioned, by now the English education having spread, a good number of Indians were available who could be employed in clerical and other such jobs at lower rates of payment. The Indians also grudged the non-availability of employment facilities, and their grievance had to be removed as far as possible.

Bentinck took steps to make some of the lower services available to the Indians. His more important step in this connection however was his introduction of three grades of judicial services in which the Indians were to be employed. The highest of these was that of *Sadar Amin*, and his salary was to be Rs 750 per month.

These steps of Bentinck were significant. Not only was a grievance of the Indians partially removed, but also a substantial measure of financial savings resulted.

*The Judicial Reforms.* Before we study the judicial reforms introduced by Bentinck it would be essential to know certain facts regarding the existing judicial machinery, and its defects which necessitated a reform. In the time of Lord Cornwallis who ruled as Governor-General from 1786 to 1793, the Provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had been divided into four divisions, and in each of these divisions was established a Court of Circuit presided over by two covenanted servants of the Company. Each of these Circuit Courts moved in its respective division and decided the cases on the spot. Their decisions were executed by the district magistrates, who decided the minor cases themselves, but for the serious cases they held the culprits in the prison till the Circuit Court met at the district headquarters and dealt with them. The punishments involving death or perpetual imprisonment had to be confirmed by the *Sadar Nizamat Adalat*.

Besides, there were four Provincial Courts of Appeal for the three provinces quartered at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Dacca and Patna. They were presided over by three covenanted servants of the Company each, and held original as well as the appellate jurisdiction. Their decisions were final for cases up to the value of Rs 1,000. For higher cases the appeal lay in the *Sadar Diwani Adalat* at Calcutta which supervised judicial administration and entertained cases direct above the value of Rs 5,000.

This system suffered from several defects which required urgent attention. The first defect was that by now the Company had acquired many new territories, and Calcutta as the headquarters for the judicial administration was too far away from them. Secondly, there

was a serious inefficiency and irregularity in the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit. They, according to Bentinck, served only as "resting places for those members of the service who were deemed unfit for higher responsibilities." The judges of these courts possessed no sufficient knowledge, and they were falling into arrears of work. The undertrials remained in the prisons for months before a Circuit Court met at the district headquarters and disposed of their cases. Besides, these undertrials suffered badly under police oppression, but the Circuit Courts failed in remedying the situation.

The entire system as it obtained, suffered from being too expensive, and yet involved delay and unnecessary harassment. The Indians were appointed only as *Munsifs*, in *zilla* and city courts, while from positions of higher responsibility and powers in the judicial hierarchy they were entirely excluded. Persian was the court language, and the litigants could not express their grievances in their own language.

Assisted by Sir Charles Metcalfe, Holt Mackenzie and Butterworth Bayley, Bentinck took certain very solid steps to obviate these defects. His first step was to abolish the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit altogether. In place of them, Commissioners of Revenue and Circuit were appointed to do the same job. The Bengal Presidency was divided for this purpose into twenty divisions, and each of the divisions was placed under a Commissioner. Besides performing the functions of the abolished courts, the Commissioners were also to supervise Police and Collectors of Revenue in their respective jurisdictions. For revenue cases they themselves were subordinated to the Board of Revenue, while for criminal cases they were to work under the control of the *Sadar Nizamat Adalat*.

A Regulation was passed in 1829 which empowered the Magistrates to award upto two years imprisonment with labour. Appeals from them lay to the court of the Commissioner of that area. The Regulation of 1831 empowered the Collectors to decide summarily the cases relating to rent. In these cases no appeal lay to any higher court, the only remedy granted against the decision of a Collector being a regular suit against him in a civil court.

In the same year, 1831, the sessions work of the commissioners was transferred to the civil judges; and thus the office of the sessions and district judge originated.

Another Regulation was passed in 1831 under which respectable Indians were to be appointed in the *zilla* and city courts. They were to be called *Munsifs*, were to get fixed salaries and could decide court cases up to the value of three hundred rupees. It was also provided in 1831 that the Governor-General-in-Council would appoint respectable Indians to the post of *Sadar Amins*, who would hear



appeals from the *zilla* and city courts and would constitute the highest Indian judicial authority. Like *Munsifs* they would get fixed and regular salaries. But it was expressly laid down that the cases relating to Europeans and the Americans could be tried neither by the *Munsifs*, nor by *Sadar Amins*.

In 1832, separate courts of *Sadar Diwani Adalat* and *Sadar Nizamat Adalat* were established at Allahabad. And a regulation of 1832 introduced a sort of jury system in Bengal, the basic purpose of it being the securing of Indian help in the shape of a jury for the European judges. The Regulation provided that the judges could refer the cases to *Panchayats*, which would consist of respectable Indians and would hold enquiry and supply reports to the judges. The judges were also empowered to appoint Indian assessors who would give their opinions in a case separately.

The judicial reforms of Lord William Bentinck proved to be yet another turning point in the history of Indian judiciary. While the abolition of the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit and appointment in their place of Commissioners introduced an individual responsibility and made it less possible for the police to be oppressive and undertrials to suffer suspense, the introduction of the Indian element into the judicial machinery of the country was a significant step which set the ball towards the Indianisation of services rolling. By making it possible for the European judges in Bengal to refer their cases to *Panchayats* consisting of Indians, while on the one hand Bentinck provided for the jury system to grow in this country, on the other hand he made it more possible for the local knowledge and opinion to have its effect in serious problems of justice. While it would be wrong to say that these reforms threw open the doors of employment to the Indians, it would be no exaggeration to say that they proved to be a major step towards the direction. The way for a campaign under the great leaders like Sir Surendra Nath Bannerjee was opened, and India slowly moved towards her goal.

*Educational Reforms.* "Of all the acts associated with the administration of Lord William Bentinck" thus writes his biographer, Demetrius C. Boulger, "there was none more important or of greater consequence than the new education policy inaugurated in 1834, which was based on the establishment of English as the official language of the country."<sup>1</sup> A brief review of the early developments in this field before we discuss the changes brought about in the time of Bentinck may not be out of place.

"It is a historical fact, that the Ancient India from the period of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira Jain to that of Yuan Chwang was

1. Boulger, Demetrius C., *Lord William Bentinck* (1890), p. 149,

a well-educated country by modern standards."<sup>1</sup> The Indian Universities like Nalanda and the Taxila were famous and many foreign students came to them to secure higher education. With the decline of the Hindu power, however, the ancient glory of India declined though education was not entirely neglected, and it continued, if less by State patronage, at least by sufficient private efforts, so that when the East India Company founded its power, there were numerous *Pathshalas* attached to the Hindu religious institutions, and as numerous *Makhtabs* linked with mosques, etc. which imparted education to the country's children. But these educational institutions were irregular and imperfect. There existed no regular state control over them, nor did the teachers always follow this as a regular profession.

Under the British, education was first seriously taken up as a Department of Administration only in 1854. From 1854 to 1871 "Its distinctive note was the extension of higher secondary schools with the University Entrance Examination as their objective..... After 1871 attention began to be paid to primary education, but higher education still largely held the field."<sup>2</sup> But this does not mean that before 1854 education was entirely neglected. In fact foundations of a sound system of education were laid only during this period, over which a superstructure was raised after 1854.

As the Company developed its power, in the initial stages no interference was made in the existing system of education, and the endowments of the Indian princes for the purpose were recognised. It was Warren Hastings who for the first time got directly interested in the subject, and founded a College at Calcutta in 1772 under the name of Calcutta Madrasa to train the Muslims for the Company's services. In 1785 the Bengal Asiatic Society was established by Sir William Jones for the encouragement of historical researches. And in 1791 Duncan, a Resident of Benaras, opened a Sanskrit College in that city, "for the preservation and cultivation of the Laws, Literature and Religion of the nation, to accomplish the same purpose for the Hindus as the Madrasa for the Mohammedans and specially qualified Hindu Assistants to European Judges." The efforts of John Owen, the Chaplain to the Bengal Presidency, however, to set up schools for teaching English to the people, failed.

At the time of the renewal of the Charter of the Company in 1793, the matter came up for discussion in the House of Commons where Wilberforce tried to win over the House towards sending missionaries and teachers to educate the Indians, though he did not succeed. A couple of years later, Charles Grant, one of the

1. Thakore B.K., *Indian Administration to the Dawn of the Responsible Government*, p. 339.
2. Thompson, E.C. Meysey, *India of To-day*, 1913, p. 183.

Directors of the Company, also insisted that English language and literature should be brought to India just as the Muslims had brought and spread Persian in that country. And in 1811, Lord Minto complained that the development of science and literature was being completely neglected in India. So did his colleague, T. Lumsden.

It was in these circumstances that the Charter Act of 1813 was passed which instructed the Indian Government that "a sum of not less than one lakh rupees in a year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India." But for more than twenty years, there being no definite plan for educational development, the sum of one lakh rupees earmarked every year went on accumulating, and could not be used.

In the meanwhile, however, the private and local efforts at the development of English education continued, and bore some fruits. An association was founded by Raja Rammohun Roy for the establishment of an institution to impart education to the Hindus in Western thought and languages. A Hindu College was opened in 1819. But the enthusiasm of the workers for western culture and thought had now become greater, and therefore yet another institution to educate Hindus and Muslims in English thought was founded by the Bishop of Calcutta in 1818. Another pioneer in this field was Elphinstone in Bombay, due to whose efforts a school was opened at Bombay and another at Poona for the purpose of teaching English, and through it to educate people in humanities and sciences.

As a result of all these activities the English language and education developed their popularity. The demand for them increased, while that for purely Sanskrit and Arabic learning declined, so that even those institutions meant for the latter purposes had to attach English classes to meet the popular demand.

A question which arose was, whether English or Oriental learning should be developed in the country. The sum of one lakh rupees annually earmarked for education had not yet been used. In 1823 Adams had appointed a Committee of Public Instructions to make suggestions on the subject, but the First Burmese War intervened and nothing could be done. The annual grant of one lakh rupees was raised by the Charter Act of 1833 to 100,000, and now Lord Bentinck, had to take up the question seriously and decide upon a scheme by which the money could be expended. A great controversy developed as to what type of education should be developed by the Government officially. Two schools of thought emerged, the one led by H.H. Wilson which supported Oriental learning, and the other led by Sir Charles Trevelyan and later on strengthened by

Sir Charles Macaulay and Raja Rammohun Roy which stood for English education.

The Orientalists argued that the original intention of the Charter Act of 1813 in granting one lakh rupees annually was for the development of Oriental learning and, therefore, this money could not be expended for any other purpose than this. The Oriental learning was the best for the Orientals and suited to their inclinations and aptitudes and it developed their best qualities. Moreover any effort to develop English learning would seriously injure the existing efforts of the private agencies in *Pathshalas*, and *Madrasas* and other such institutions, and education would thereby receive a set-back. Nor was the Sanskrit and Arabic literature inferior to the English. There were great treasures in the ancient Hindu thought which India could not afford to neglect. A silent argument was that their ignorance of English thought would keep the Indians submissive to the British.

On the other hand the arguments of the English School, too, were no less strong and weighty. A committee appointed under Lord Macaulay as Chairman in 1835 to make recommendations reached a deadlock, while Lord Macaulay in a brilliant Minute expounded the benefits of English learning. He argued forcefully that the intention of the authors of the Act of 1813 was to devote the granted funds only for the English education. He asserted that nobody could ever deny that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India." And further : "Neither as the languages of law nor as the languages of religions have Sanskrit or Arabic any peculiar claim to our encouragement." Moreover, the spread of English education would train the Indians to understand the English system, and it would provide cheap Indian clerks, as others argued. The spread of the English culture would develop a demand for English goods in this country and give a great impetus to the English industries. Nor did the argument of the Orientalists that after getting English education the Indians would not remain submissive, appeal to them. For Macaulay declared : "Are we to keep the people of India ignorant in order that we may keep them submissive ?" In fact, he said, instructed in European knowledge, if in some future age the Indians demanded European institutions, that "will be the proudest day in English History."

Born and brought up in an English society, we do not know how far Macaulay had tasted the ancient Indian lore and learning. But his understanding of India and her past definitely does not seem to have been impressive; for had it been otherwise he should not have made his preposterous remarks that India did not possess much of her own in which she could take pride. Nor is it clear how he claimed

his interpretation of the Charter Act of 1813 to be true. The words "revival and improvement of literature" definitely imply a different meaning than what was construed by Macaulay.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the modern Western learning had its merits. Lord Bentinck was prepared to be influenced by Macaulay and his followers, and ultimately on 7 March 1835 he passed a resolution in his Council: "all the funds at the disposal of the Government would henceforth be spent in imparting to the Indians a knowledge of English literature and science."

While "the colleges of Oriental learning were not to be abolished, the practice of supporting their students during their period of education was to be discontinued," and the "Government funds were not to be spent on the printing of Oriental works"

Later on when the Muslims of Calcutta in a petition to Lord Bentinck expressed their fear of Indians being converted to Christianity under the new policy, the Governor-General declared in definite words that the "mingling direct or indirect teaching of Christianity with the system of instruction, ought to be positively forbidden," and that there should be absolutely no interference with the religious beliefs of the students. Yet the students were inculcated with Christian beliefs and thoughts.

The merits and demerits of the English learning are too well known to be discussed in detail. In its favour we could say that it threw open the floodgates of the treasures of English knowledge and revolutionised the whole gamut of thought in this country. A new class of literates arose, which, inspired by the English ideas of liberty and democracy, fought for these privileges in India. The common language and common thought gave Indians a political unity, and that alone is worth anything India can pay for. Yet on the other hand, under the glamour of the Western self-assertive attitude of life, India began to lose the characteristic features of her ancient thought, which were obligation, duty and mutual service. Under the impact of the English education in India, Indian behaviour and mode of life changed. India began to ape the West in her food, dress and habits, and this created wide markets for the consumption of English goods in this country. India began economically to be exploited even more.

*Sati*. "A memorable act of Lord William Bentinck's government, and the one with which his name will be most prominently associated in history, was the abolition of widow-burning."<sup>1</sup>

The word *Sati* is perhaps derived from *Sat*, which means truth. The origin of the *Sati* system, in which a widow committed herself to

1. Boulger, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

fire on the funeral pyre of her husband, is not very definitely known. Pyare Lal, the Private Secretary of Mahatma Gandhi, dug out certain facts which showed its probable origin. Among the ancient Aryans considerable freedom was permitted to a marriageable girl to choose her husband and she often fell in love at a premature age and married a man only to discover later on that he was after all not the one with whom she would spend her life. She would fall in love with another man and try poisoning her husband to death to remove the obstacle from her way. As such cases began to increase, and married men began to die young, the elders decreed that henceforth if a woman's husband died before a child was born to them, she would have to commit herself to fire together with her husband's body. The practice of *Sati* was thus started, which we do not know how, with the passage of time, became sanctified, and it became a religious duty of every virtuous widow to perform.

The *Sati* as it was under the British, was committed particularly by higher classes, as also among the ancient Greeks, Germans, Slavs and other races,<sup>1</sup> and it was attended by recitation of verses and special rituals. It was supposed to be voluntary and was unlike the custom sustained in Central and Western Asia, and in Eastern Europe, where after the death of a man his widows and slave-girls were purchased at his grave. At the time of *Sati*, a widow put on her best ornaments and dress, and decorated herself. All her ornaments and costly attire fell to the Brahmins before she jumped into fire, or after she had been reduced to ashes. We have an instance of the widows of Jawahir Singh, the *wazir* of Punjab after the death of Ranjit Singh, who committed themselves to fire, and the Sikh soldiers who stood *guards*, as in the words of Latif, "remorselessly plundered them, and as the unfortunate women were mounting the funeral pyre, these villainous guards tore away their nose and ear ornaments (which were worn in strict conformity with their religion) from their persons....snatched from the fire the trinkets and embroidery on their costly attire."<sup>2</sup>

Be that as it may, it should be very much obvious that vested interests had created the custom, which were bound to oppose any proposal at reforming the evil. Akbar had tried to reform, but failed. So did Albuquerque in Goa. In 1823 the Court of Directors hinted at its abolition, provided there was no active opposition. Amherst demanded the opinion of his officers on the subject, but there was no unanimity.

When Bentinck came, this rite was rampant. "The number of *Satis* steadily increased.... and the number of widows immolated in a

1. Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 625, quoted by Kulkarni, V.B., *op. cit.*, pp. 127-28.

2. Latif, Mohammad, *History of the Punjab*, pp. 536-37.

single year in the lower Provinces alone sometimes exceeded 800, while the average for the ten years prior to 1828 did not fall below 600.”<sup>1</sup> William Bentinck was determined to remove the crime, but like a wise man, in a matter so intricately interwoven with religious beliefs, he proceeded cautiously. Before proceeding in the matter he wanted to assure himself that no serious opposition was to be apprehended from the people, particularly from the soldiery. Opinion of 49 important officers was invited on the subject; and of these five opposed any interference; twelve favoured abolition, but no absolute and direct prohibition under the Government authority; eight supported prohibition by indirect interference of magistrates and other public officers; while the rest advocated a total and immediate suppression of the crime.

The matter was precipitated in 1828 when four out of the five judges of the *Nizamat Adalat* placed on their record that it was safe to suppress the crime immediately. Some enlightened Indians such as Raja Rammohun Roy also supported him. And in a Minute of 8 November 1829 regarding *Sati*, William Bentinck declared: “The first and primary object of my heart is the benefit of the Hindus. I know nothing so important to the improvement of their future condition as the establishment of a purer morality, whatever their belief, and a more just conception of the will of God.”<sup>2</sup> The Regulation of December 1829 was passed, which declared *Sati* as “culpable homicide.”

As a reaction to this, there were some disturbances, particularly in Bengal where some people endeavoured to fight in the courts of law. A test case was submitted by them to the Privy Council in London, while a petition to the King was drawn up. But their case was weakened by persons such as Dwarkanath Tagore and Rammohun Roy who wrote letters supporting the Government’s action.

*The Thugs.* The *Thugs* were an all-India association of robbers who moved in bands of three hundred or even more and could collect in large numbers at the times of emergency. They committed organised crime in secret connivance with the local chieftains, zamindars and officials, and accompanied the travellers for miles till a proper spot for the crime was reached. It was an essential trait of their system that they strangled the victim before robbing him.

It was only in 1799 after the capture of Seringapatam that the British first realised that the *Thugs* had an all-India association. Further investigations were made by officers like Thornton and Captain Sleeman which showed that each band had a regular gradation of officers to command them. A *Jamadar*, for instance, before he was

1. Boulger, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

2. *ibid.* p. 110.



appointed so, must be expert in bribing and hoodwinking the local officials, or he must belong to a family whose ancestors have been following this profession from times immemorial, or he must enjoy a reputation as an expert strangler, or should possess the qualities of a natural leader. If he did not possess any of these qualifications, he could not be appointed a *Jamadar*. Only an outstanding and experienced member was appointed a *Subedar*.

Further it was discovered that they had a very well defined system of dividing the plunder amongst them. A special share was always set aside for the leader; the second special share going to the local chieftain or an official in connivance with whom the crime was perpetrated. Then a share went for religious ceremonies, which were an essential part. For we learn from Captain Sleeman that the *Thugs* believed that the crime had originated with the goddess Kali who always helped her worshippers in the matter, if she was properly propitiated, and if the rules of *Thuggee* were properly followed. After this then, the entire plunder was divided into one share for each member; two parts going to the actual murderer.

After the discovery of a few facts about them, the Government of the East India Company tried to suppress this crime. But proceedings were slow and half-hearted. Moreover, the Company had not yet become a sovereign power in India, wielding its authority over her territories far and wide so as to attempt a problem of an all-India magnitude. It was, therefore, reserved only for William Bentinck, when the British power in India was consolidated, to turn serious thought to the subject.

In 1829 Bentinck instructed his agent in the Narbada territories to take serious action against the miscreants wherever found. Captain Sleeman, who had gathered a vast knowledge on the subject, was appointed to assist him. Besides this, the officers of the Government all over the country were issued a special order to report all the cases and further information regarding their practices. The entire Governmental machinery was alerted on the subject.

As the matter was seriously proceeded with all over the country, further information flowed to the Centre. Many difficulties were pointed out by different district magistrates and other officers, which they came across in dealing with the *Thugs*. It was pointed out that the connivance of the local officials and zamindars made it very difficult to apprehend the culprits. In a case from Bundelkhand, it was reported that the local authorities had a definite understanding with the *Thug* leaders. Such collusions sometimes went very far and in one case a *Thug* approver informed the authorities that they paid a tribute to the Gwalior State.

Another difficulty in distinguishing the miscreants was that they



spent most of their time in respectable professions, only occasionally indulging in crime. And when they did indulge in it, they never did so within thirty miles of their abode. At times they made a journey of hundreds of miles, and for days together, taking with them their children below twelve years of age, so as to avoid suspicion; and taking along also bullocks and donkeys to pass as merchants. The crimes were committed in secluded spots. As Thornton wrote : "Much frequented roads, passing through extensive jungles, where the ground is soft for the grave, or the jungle thick to cover them, and where the local authorities took no notice of the bodies, were favourite spots."

Thornton gives an interesting account as to how the strangling was done. "While travelling along, one of the gang suddenly throws a rope or cloth round the neck of the devoted individual and retains hold of one end; the other end being seized by an accomplice. The instrument of death, crossed behind the neck, is then drawn very tight, the two *Thugs* who hold it pressing the head of the victim forwards : a third villain, who is in readiness behind the traveller, seizes him by the legs, and he is thus thrown on the ground. In this position there is little opportunity of resistance. The operation of noose is aided by kicks inflicted in the manner most likely to produce vital injury, and the sufferer is thus quickly dispatched." The murder of the victims made it yet more difficult to get information and trace all the criminals.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest difficulty was that the law of the Company required a definite proof before proceeding against a person. Mere suspicion, however strong, could not help. And in the above circumstances a definite proof of the crime was not found.

In order to obviate the above difficulties, a Regulation was therefore passed in 1830 whereby a mere association of a person with a robber, even if he had not committed a crime, could lead to his arrest. The enactment of this measure made it now possible to take up the matter more seriously, and within a few years after this thousands of these robbers were arrested and punished by death, transportation for life, or were sent to the reformatory at Jabalpur. Thus slowly ended the crime which had baffled the authorities for so long.

Some other reforms carried out during the time of Bentinck, related to the Public Works Department. The construction of a road from Bombay to Agra was commenced. Digging up of irrigation canals in North-West Provinces was undertaken, and the Grand Trunk Road between Calcutta and Delhi was put under repair.

A measure was also enacted which enabled the Hindu converts to

1. Boulger, *op. cit.*, 122.

Christianity to inherit their ancestral property. This made conversions to Christianity smoother.

## RELATIONS WITH THE INDIAN STATES

In his relations with the Indian States to which only a passing reference may be made, Bentinck proved to be a master diplomat who knew where the real interests of his masters lay, and how to serve them best. It would be wrong to call his policy one of complete non-intervention, yet it may be said that it was not very much aggressive, though it did protect the British interests to an aggressive extent.

Nizam Sikandar Shah of Hyderabad died in 1829, and was succeeded by Nazir-ud-Daula. The latter requested Bentinck's Government to withdraw some British officers whom he suspected of having created some trouble in the state, and Bentinck agreed.

There was also trouble in Jaipur. The Rani and her paramour were put to death in 1835, and the British Resident was criticised for some of his activities. But the Governor-General preferred not to intervene. The same policy was followed towards Bhopal, where serious trouble followed the taking over of the control of the Government by Sikandar Begum.

An effective intervention was made in the cases of Mysore and Coorg. In the former, the Chief of the state invited trouble at the hands of his people who revolted against his insane and oppressive policies. The Governor-General after watching the events for some time, took over the administration of the state, which continued in the British hands for a considerable time even after Bentinck. In the case of Coorg, its Chief being oppressive and insane put every male member of his family to death, and displeased his subjects; Bentinck withdrew the British protection from him. But when this failed, he had little compunction in putting an end to the state, and annexing it to the British dominions.

His relations with Ranjit Singh whom he met at Rupar on 26 October 1831 and lulled him to sleep, while Pottinger had been sent to Sind to destroy the Sikh interests in that state and to sign a commercial treaty with the Amirs, prove in Bentinck a diplomat at his best. He had little compunction in telling lies to Ranjit Singh that the British were the least interested in Sind. This subject will occupy a more important page in the British relations with Sind and the Sikhs, to which an interested reader may refer.<sup>1</sup>

1. See Chapter on Lord Ellenborough and Annexation of Sind.

### THE CHARTER ACT OF 1833

One of the most important events of the reign of William Bentinck was the passing of the Charter Act of 1833, which restricted the patronage of the Directors, and by strictly centralising the administration, created certain conditions which took several decades to come back to where they ought to have been.

The Act of 1813<sup>1</sup>, renewed the Charter of the East India Company for another 20 years. This period expired in 1833, and now the Charter had to be extended unless the Company was required to be dissolved. Between 1813 and 1833 there had been a great change. The great Industrial Revolution in England which had swept away the mediaeval industrial system in the land and covered it with pulsating machines, developed new aspirations, hopes and ambitions in that country. The new classes of labourers and capitalists developed. The cheap products of the new machines and their export to the foreign lands enabled the people to travel widely and widen their outlook. Money flowed in, prosperity grew, thus giving birth to a new spirit of independence. Labourers claimed better working conditions, capitalists tried to suppress them, a new class of intelligentsia developed to help the former, new literature came into being, and the cry for liberty and equality echoed from every direction. The French Revolution had done much to clear the path for this. English writers like Priestley, Price, Wakefield and Mackintosh had done enough to teach the significance of the new age. The Tory party had been defeated in the House of Commons in 1830, and whether King William IV liked it or not, he had to accept Grey, the Whig leader, as his new Prime Minister. Macaulay became Secretary of the Board of Control, and James Mill influenced the public opinion inside and outside the Parliament.

The triumph of Whigs in the Parliament opened the way for the triumph of the liberal principles, the way for the triumph of the rights of man. The Parliamentary Reform Act was passed in 1832 which regenerated the spirit of liberalism in its fourfold strength. The dignity of man was recognised, and the principle of *laissez-faire* came to the fore.

In short, the old spirit of conservatism and exploitation had weakened and the new spirit of liberalism grew, and a compromise between these two was struck.

It was in these circumstances that the demand for the renewal of the Charter came before the Parliament. There were some, as it was to be expected, who attacked bitterly the way the destiny of millions of Indian people was being controlled by a Joint Stock

1. See Chapter on Lord Hastings.

Company. Buckingham was foremost, who advocated a beginning of the representative system in India, proposing that the Governor-General's Council should admit some representatives of the British people, and some of the Indian. It was also proposed that the Company's rule in India should be ended.

The above criticism and proposals, however, were too extreme. But the character of the men in power ensured that at least the existing set-up in India would not be permitted to continue. Agreeing with the need for reform, Macaulay asserted that the Company's rule in India had to be continued. Sitting thousands of miles away, he said, it would be vain to hope that the Parliament could rule India better than the Company could. Nor, he said, was the interest and knowledge of the Parliament in the Indian problems deep and intimate. A "broken head in cold Bath Fields produces a greater sensation among us than three pitched battles in India," he declared. Moreover, he continued, England was divided into parties—Tory, Whig and others. But the East India Company was none of these, and it alone was capable of administering India with impartiality and promptness which were the two commanding needs of that country.

*The Provisions.* Macaulay and the party in power, as it was to be hoped, won the day, and the Charter Act of 1833 was passed. The new Charter, as it concerned the Company and the people of England extended the Company's life for another twenty years, to administer India in "trust for His Majesty, his heirs and successors." Commercial functions of the Company in India were, however, taken away, and the Company henceforth was to remain in India only as a political functionary. The Company secured a compensation in the shape of a dividend of 10½ per cent out of the annual Indian revenues for the next forty years. The Company's debts were also to be cleared from this source, and henceforward India was to be held by the Company, as mentioned above, only in trust for the Crown. President of the Board of Control in the Lords now became Minister for Indian Affairs. His Colleagues disappeared, and in their place he would now have two Assistant Commissioners to assist him. His Secretary was to be an important man who would speak for him in the Commons, and this opened the way for the development of the office of the Secretary of State for India. Patronage of the Directors was restricted, whereby they would now nominate to the Haileybury College double the number of the actual vacancies in the Government to be filled up. From these candidates the top-masts would get the jobs. This provision, however, had to be amended in favour of the Directors in 1834. The licensing system was abolished, and now any Englishman could go, settle in India, acquire property and trade as he pleased. The Governor-General was to take measures to see that these Englishmen behaved properly.

The provisions relating to the Central Government in India were, however, more important. For the first time now, the "Governor-General of Bengal" became the "Governor-General of India." The powers of the Governor-General were now tremendously increased, the legislative centralisation being more important in this respect. Before the passing of this Act there existed five different kinds of law which some times conflicted with one another, were ill-drawn and created every type of confusion. These were : the Acts passed by the Parliament, the Charter Acts, the orders of the Governor-General in Council known as Regulations, the orders of the Supreme Court and the laws made by the different Presidencies. Their differing nature is obvious from the remarks of the Law Commission : "Thus, in Bengal, serious forgeries were punishable with imprisonment for a term double of the term fixed for perjury. In the Bombay Presidency on the contrary, perjury is punishable with imprisonment for a term double that of the Madras Presidency. There were many more and equally glaring discrepancies. The result was utter chaos and confusion in administering the criminal law."<sup>1</sup> It was essential that a uniformity of law should be established all over the country, which became yet more imperative as large numbers of Englishmen began to migrate to India and settle in different parts of this country.

Due to all these reasons the Charter Act provided for the centralisation of legislation. The measures enacted by the Governor-General in Council were now no more to be called Regulations : they become laws. The Governor-General in Council alone was now empowered to make laws in India. He could now enact on all subjects, for all places and persons and his laws would be enforceable by all the courts of the country. He could amend or repeal any law hitherto in force or hereafter to be in force; could make laws for all the servants of the Company, whether within the British Indian territories, or within the territories of the Indian princes in alliance with the Company; could make a code of military discipline and Articles of War; and could provide for the administration of justice. In certain respects, however, his powers were restricted. Thus for instance he could not alter the provisions of the Charter Act, could not alter the prerogative of the Crown, nor could he enact against the laws of Parliament or against its authority. He could not alter the Mutiny Act, nor could he change the written or unwritten constitution of England. For the fulfilment of the Governor-General's legislative duties a new Member, known as the Law Member, was added to his Executive Council, who would attend the meetings of the Council by special invitation; his presence was necessary at the time of legislation, though he could not vote, and the quorum of the Council for legislative purposes was fixed at three, while for the administrative purpose it was two. The codification of law was also provided for, for which purpose a law commission was to be appointed.

Besides, the Act also introduced an administrative centralisation. All the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras were placed under the Governor-General's control. He was given the powers to superintend, direct and control all the civil and military affairs of the country ; and could remove any member of the government of a Presidency for disobeying him. When he visited a Presidency, he would supercede its Governor, and could override the local council.

Yet more important in this respect, however, was the financial centralisation which the Act introduced. The Presidencies were deprived of all their powers of taxation and expenditure, except with the prior sanction of the Centre. As Strachey wrote : "The whole of the revenues from all the provinces of British India were treated as belonging to a single fund, expenditure from which could be authorised by the Governor-General in Council alone... If it became necessary to spend £ 20 on a road between two local markets, to rebuild a stable that had tumbled down, or to entertain a menial servant on wages of 10 shilling a month, the matter had to be formally reported for the orders of the Government of India." No gratuity or allowance nor a salary could be granted, nor could a new office be created by a Presidency Government, except with the permission of the Centre.

There were definite reasons which made such financial centralisation necessary. The constant wars had effected the Central finances badly, so much so that out of 25 years preceding this Act, as many as 18 were deficit years. The Centre was responsible for the solvency of the Empire; the administration growing complex, added to the Centre's financial needs ; the political relations with the States and foreign lands, all required money; it was the Centre which was responsible for financial dealings in this country to the Home authorities; a uniformity was required; and the credit and confidence of the British capitalists whose increasing investment in the public works of this country was required, had to be maintained. All this made financial centralisation necessary.

Concerning the Presidencies, the Act provided that the number of the members of the Governor's Council at Bombay and Madras should be reduced to two. The Presidencies of Bombay and Madras would have separate armies under their respective Commanders-in-Chief, though to be finally controlled by the Centre. In matters of legislation, the Presidencies were completely subordinated to the Centre, as referred to above. So was done in financial powers, where even for an insignificant expenditure the Central sanction had to be obtained. The Act provided that Bishops should be appointed at Madras, Calcutta and Bombay for the benefit of the Christian population in India. And that the Presidency of Bengal should be divided into two, viz., the Presidency of Bengal and that of Agra.

This provision of the Act was however suspended by the Act of 1835 which provided for a Lieutenant-Governorship for the North-Western Provinces (now UP). The Governor-General of India continued to be the Governor of Bengal.

Of the general provisions, the most important was the Section 87 which provided that "No native of India nor any natural born subject of His Majesty, would be disabled from holding any place, office or employment only by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour." This provision was of great significance, as it abolished every distinction except that of merit. Though the provision was not immediately put into force, it formed a basis for future agitation, and the people could not be contented unless they obtained what was promised. Besides, the Act required of the Government of India to take immediate steps towards the abolition of slavery in the country.

*An Appraisal.* The Charter Act of 1833 obviously, was a measure of great importance. At Home one of the most important developments was that the Company was relieved of its monopoly of trade in India as well as with China, and this completed the work of the Charter Act of 1813, thereby changing the character of the Company from commercial to administrative and political. Mere merchants looking on every thing with a motive of personal advantage, could never act as efficient administrators. As a result of this Act the very character of the Court of Directors was now changed. Marshman comments : "The separation now effected of the functions of the State from all commercial speculations served to give more elevated tone to the views and policy of the Court of Directors, and to impart a more efficient character to their administration."<sup>1</sup> The President of the Board of Control who now became wholly responsible for the Indian Affairs, assisted by a Secretary in the Commons too was no man of small importance. The political character now definitely dominated the commercial one, and the gate was thrown open for the liberal spirit of the British Parliament to travel through this Secretary to India. The freedom to the Europeans to come and settle in India, made it possible for the individualistic character and concrete mind of the English race to come into closer contact with the family and philosophic character of the Indian people. The old fanatic spirit began slowly to die, and though in some cases the European manners began to be aped to the extent of absurdity, but the result on the whole was wholesome.

Nor was the legislative, financial and general administrative centralisation less significant. The expanding territories and the administrative problems which became increasingly complex needed one solid voice to be dealt with, and this was made possible by the

1. Marshman, *History of India*, p. 115.



Act. Better possibilities were now created for the consolidation of territories for the first time after the large number of them had been acquired in the third Maratha War. The way was opened for differing local and parochial tendencies to be dominated by the requirements of the national good and unity. And as the problems now changed their character from local to national, a unified national approach was required to solve them, which necessitated and facilitated the growth of Indian nationalism and the nationalist movement.

The provision for the codification of law was also important. It said that "such laws as may be applicable in common to all classes of the inhabitants of the said territories, due regards being had to the rights, feelings and peculiar usages of the people, should be enacted and that all laws and customs having the force of law within the same territories should be ascertained and consolidated and as occasion may require, amended." A Commission for the purpose, as required, was set up, and Macaulay was entrusted with the very important duty of drafting laws which could be enforced all over India. This duty Macaulay performed admirably well. The Indian Penal Code which, according to Lyall, is a "standing tribute to Macaulay's legal acumen and proficiency;"<sup>1</sup> and the Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes, thus were created; and the importance of these too cannot in any manner be over estimated. A common law for the whole country was a boon and a strong force which made its great contribution towards national integrity.

The provision for the abolition of slavery was also praiseworthy. But one of the greatest provisions of the Act was its Section 87 under which only merit was henceforth to be considered for recruitment to the services of the Company. The clause, comments Ramsay Muir, "proclaimed as an indisputable principle, the remarkable and noble doctrine that the interests of the native subjects are to be consulted in preference to those of Europeans, whenever the two came in competition. Is there any parallel in history to this declaration of ruling race in regard to its recently conquered subjects?"<sup>2</sup> It is no fault of the framers of the Act if this provision was not honoured in practice by those who were responsible for enforcing it in the country. It laid down a standard which, if not immediately achieved, was there to remind that it had to be achieved. The complete achievement of it was not much short of complete independence, and therefore it formed a very good ground for Indian agitation to require of the British to fulfil their own promises.

There were certain drawbacks, especially in centralisation. The vastness of the country with multifarious population, with different

1. Lyall, A., *The British Dominion in India*, p. 412.

2. Muir, Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 234.



local languages and different economic structures, was bound to make it utterly difficult for the Centre to understand the details of the provincial administrative problems. In finance particularly, the Act developed friction between the Centre and the provinces; the former permitting less and not always in time, while the latter demanding more and without delay. The patient and gentle governors suffered, while the most violent of them were always able to secure best in financial grants from the Centre. There were general complaints that the Governor-General having special affiliation to Bengal, was biased in favour of that province. Nor could these complaints be entirely wrong. The Act also introduced in the provinces the habits of irresponsibility and lack of thrift. If greater estimates for local requirements were shown, greater financial grants from the Centre could be secured. But the amounts so secured being more than what was required, the extra was always wasted.

Yet, the immediate requirement of the country was centralisation, and this the Act achieved. The Act, considered from any angle, was undoubtedly the most important measure passed by the Parliament in relation to India till 1909. None of the Acts of 1813, 1853, 1858, etc. could match it in importance. The Charter Act of 1813 still kept the commercial element in the Company's character intact; that of 1853 introduced no important changes except simplifying administration; while the Act of 1858 placed merely on record what already existed in this country. The rest of the legislative measures too pale into insignificance when placed before the Act of 1833, which indeed was a landmark, as a great achievement of the first reformed Parliament of England.

### RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY AND HIS BRAHMO SAMAJ

No account of the reign of Bentinck would be complete without a reference to the Brahmo Samaj and its founder Raja Rammohun Roy who, according to Romain Rolland, was a "man of gigantic personality whose name to our shame is not inscribed in the pantheon of Europe as well as of Asia, who sank his ploughshare in the soil of India and after sixty years of labour left her transformed. ...And out of the earth of Bengal has come forth the harvest—a harvest of works and men. And from his inspiration sprang the Tagores."<sup>1</sup>

Raja Rammohun Roy, "the living-bridge over which India marched from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future, the arch which spanned the gulf between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and conservative progress,

1. Rolland, Romain, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 108.

between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vague, theism," was born in 1774 in a Brahmin family of Bengal. His family, though orthodox, was quite well-to-do and the early days of the Raja's life were spent in affluence. He seems to have been interested in religious studies right from his childhood. But he did not follow an orthodox line of study, for as early as 15 years of age, he wrote a small pamphlet in Bengali and in this he declared that idol-worship was entirely foreign to the philosophy and instructions given in the Vedas. In an utterly orthodox society, such objective and unorthodox views were utterly difficult to swallow. Little wonder, his family sent him into exile.

But the Raja seems at that young age of only 15 to have been a boy of courageous spirit. For thus being turned out, instead of being cowed down, he turned his exile into a period of an intensive mental training. He travelled from place to place in quest of knowledge, learnt English, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic to unlock the treasures of knowledge in these languages, and soon from all these studies he was able to evolve an enlightened concept of universal religion.

For a couple of years he served the East India Company, but later he settled down in Calcutta to devote his whole time for benevolent activities. He supported the cause of the Mughal Emperor of Delhi and wanted the British to permit him to continue enjoying his titles and privileges. For this the Emperor bestowed the title of Raja on him. In 1831, the Raja visited England for the purpose of pleading the Emperor's cause. It was at Bristol in England that he died on 27, September 1833.

It was Raja Rammohun Roy who, writes Rabindranath Tagore, "inaugurated the modern age in India." In the political sphere, in social and religious spheres, everywhere the Raja was the first among the Indians who fought for the advancement of this country. Politically, he believed, the British were in India by a divine dispensation. They had a mission to perform in this country, and therefore they must continue till that mission is fulfilled. He was in favour of the Indians getting political rights, but according to him only such rights should be given to them as they were competent to enjoy. Or in other words, he stood for a steady political reform in this country. He was, however, anxious that the essential conditions for the political awakening of this country must be created as early as possible. He therefore supported the introduction of English education in this country, which he believed would throw open the floodgates of English liberal and democratic thought to India. He sponsored the opening of the Hindu College in 1819, to educate the Indians on modern lines. He also helped Alexander Duff and John Wilson to start an English school.

The Raja stood and fought for the freedom of speech and expression. He started the first vernacular paper in India, *Sambad Kaumudi*, in 1821, and he set up the first press in this country. He condemned the Press Regulations of 1823 and carried on a vigorous agitation against them. He also submitted a memorial to the Supreme Court in this respect. He was perhaps influenced in his political ideas by the great English philosophers such as Bacon and Bentham. He was anxious to bring about reform in the existing administrative system of the country and was the first Indian to be consulted by the British Parliament on Indian affairs. He gave an evidence before a select committee of the British House of Commons.<sup>1</sup>

The Raja was intensely interested in social reforms in the Hindu community. He once declared : "The distinction of castes, introducing divisions and sub-divisions among them (Hindus), has entirely deprived them of political feeling, multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise."<sup>2</sup> He therefore stood for the abolition of caste distinctions and enthusiastically supported Lord William Bentinck in his measures to abolish *Sati*. Attempts were made on his life by the orthodox Hindus, but he held fast to his beliefs and carried his conviction even to the Privy Council where he submitted a counter petition to blast the assertions made by some misguided Hindu zealots who petitioned against the abolition of *Sati*. He advocated the emancipation of women, condemned widowhood and polygamy, and was against early marriage.

His greatest work, however, lay in the religious sphere. He studied Christianity, Islam and the greatest of the Hindu books. He found a unity of purpose in all the religions and tried to bring about a synthesis between them. The Raja believed in fundamental truth, and therefore he was Christian among the Christians and a Muslim among the Muslims. Yet, among the Hindus he was considered to be one of the greatest Vedantists. Such was the man who proved to be the harbinger of progressive India and who saved Bengal "from the state of coma produced by the East India Company."<sup>3</sup>

It was to propagate his faith and ideology that the Raja founded his Brahmo Samaj in 1828. Regarding the Samaj, thus writes K.T. Paul :

"India would not be India if her national movement did not begin in the plane of religion. The Brahmo Samaj was the first

1. See *Punjab Census Report 1881*, pp. 533-4.

2. *ibid*; see also Parvate, T.V., *Makers of Modern India*, Delhi, 1964.

3. Besant, Annie, *India—A Nation*, pp. 72-73.

fruit of the British connection." And again: the Brahmo Samaj founded by Raja Rammohun Roy "was an attempt to express religious life and thought afresh in assimilation of some of the ideas and usages presented by the West." It was "the first phase in the response of India to the West."<sup>1</sup>

The Raja founded the Brahmo Sabha on 20 August 1828 which later began to be known as Brahmo Samaj. The first temple of the Movement was established on 23 January 1830, which was thrown open to all for worship. Keshav Chandra Sen (1834-84) spread this movement to other parts of the country, and established "the Ved Samaj at Madras in 1864 and Prarthana Samaj at Bombay in 1867." And M.G. Ranade and Sir R.G. Bhandarkar who did much in the social and educational reforms in the Bombay Presidency, were among the members of Prarthana Samaj.<sup>2</sup>

A few words with regard to Bentinck's person and his achievement before we close. Bentinck's achievements have been differently commented upon. P.E. Roberts writes: Bentinck "may be compared with that other essentially liberal Governor-General among his successors, the Marquis of Ripon". Yet, his "character to a certain extent lacks warmth and picturesqueness."<sup>3</sup>

H.P. Princep who had close relations with Bentinck, wrote: "He had a great love of change and desire to meddle with every institution or practice that he found in work. It is impossible to deny that some of his changes were beneficial, but he as often muddled what he meddled with as improved it, and he left a great deal to be done by those who succeeded him in order to bring the machine of Government back into good working order."<sup>4</sup>

So far as the first comment is concerned, we might concede that P.E. Roberts perhaps studied William Bentinck's character more closely than we can, so as to lead him to say that it lacked "warmth and picturesqueness". But after making the above study of Bentinck, it is difficult to understand the comments which H.P. Princep has passed on his work, unless we keep in mind that Princep was Bentinck's contemporary, and everybody in his time was not a liberal and as far-sighted as Bentinck was. He might have erred at some places, but to err is human, and on that score we cannot condemn his whole life-work as a muddle. In fact on the contrary we can say that as Governor of Madras he might have committed certain

1. Paul, K.T., *The British Connection with India*, 1927, p. 39.

2. See Raghuvanshi, V.P.S., *Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought*, pp. 27-21; Sastri, Sivanath, *History of Brahmo Samaj*.

3. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-1.

4. Princep, *Origin of the Sikh Power in Punjab (1834)*, p. 224.

mistakes<sup>1</sup> which prejudiced some of his contemporary minds, but as Governor-General of India he deserves the praise of an administrator who brings an expert knowledge to bear upon anything he touches and ultimately leaves a picture of attainments which is the envy of the best minds.

Bentinck's measures of financial economy and reform, his far-sightedness to employ Indians in Government services which served the twofold purpose of saving money and removing one of the Indian grievances, his changes in the judicial machinery so as to make it more effective as also to bring it within the reach of the common man, his educational reforms which commenced a new era in the history of India, and his reform of age old social customs and suppression of the evils such as *Thuggee* which disfigured the whole face of this ancient land—these are some of his works for which the posterity in India must express its gratitude. We in India, might have a reason to criticise him for his educational policy, but everything else in his internal administration, if we do not commit the folly of applying the norms of the modern human attainments, deserves our unreserved appreciation.

William Bentinck left India in 1835, and his biographer, Demetrius C. Boulger writes : "His departure on 20th March, and when the task of reform in India had reached its end, not to be taken up for another generation, contrasted with the circumstances of his sudden and enforced exit from Madras in 1807. Even the sore feeling in the Services due to his interference with what were regarded as cherished perquisites did not prevent their cordial expression of the opinion that he had done good work in India, and that his administration formed an epoch in the history of our government in the country."<sup>2</sup>

As Bentinck reached England, he was offered peerage, which he declined. He was elected M.P. as a Liberal for Glasgow, but he was not in good health, and died in Paris on 17 June 1839. He left no issue to survive him.

We may conclude, again, with the words of Viscount Mersey: "Bentinck was a man of exemplary private life who devoted himself to the service of his country for no material reward. Of the highest birth and connection though of no particular intellectual ability, he had acquired by long and varied experience a wide knowledge of government which he exercised with a broad and benevolent mind.

1. These mistakes, again, were more of a technical nature than otherwise, he being held responsible for the faults of his subordinates.
2. Boulger, *op. cit.*, 1892, pp. 202-3.

.....Absolutely honest in intentions and patronage, magnificently hospitable, he was said never to have taken any important step without consulting his wife. Her portrait is the only one of a Governor-General's wife that hung on the walls of Government House, Calcutta."<sup>1</sup>

1. Mersey, Viscount, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

## Earl of Auckland 1836-1842

Lord and Earl of Auckland, whose childhood name was George Eden, was born on 25 August 1784 at Beckenham. His father was William Eden, First Lord of Auckland, and his mother, Eleanor was the daughter of Sir Gilbert Elliot. India's Governor-General Lord Minto was George's maternal uncle, and his own eldest sister was the sweetheart of Pitt the younger. George got his education at Eton, and then at Christ Church and was only twenty-five when he became M.P. for Woodstock, the seat which had been vacated as the result of the death of his elder brother. On the death of his father in 1810 he became a member of the Lords, was appointed President of the Board of Trade in Lord Grey's Cabinet in 1830, in 1834 he became First Lord of Admiralty under Lord Melbourne, and got his appointment as Governor-General of India in 1835.

Lord William Bentinck was succeeded in India by Sir Charles Metcalfe, a very able civil servant of the Company. The most important of his functions was the abolition of restrictions on the Indian press, which cost him his confirmation. He was recalled and Auckland took his place.

"Cold-mannered, reticent, shy, good-natured, robust of figure, disliking all pomp and parade, and delighting in regular official work, Lord Auckland was eminently fitted by temperament and long experience to discharge the most exacting duties of quiet times,"<sup>1</sup> and he was least fitted to organise wars and gain victories. He took charge as Governor-General of India in 1836.

### INTERNAL REFORMS

*The Black Act.* Amongst his works of the quiet times was the passage by Macaulay, the Law Member of his Council, of what the European community of India called the 'Black Act'. Till the

1. Trotter, Captain; L.I. *The Earl of Auckland*, 1893.

passage of this Act a European cast in a civil suit before a *Mufasal* or a country court, could carry his appeal, instead of to *Sadar Adalat* or a higher Court of the Company, direct to the Supreme Court of the Crown. It was an anomaly that if a *Sadar Court* which consisted of the selected members of the East India Company's service, could be good enough for millions of the Indians, it was not so for a handful of the white settlers in the country. The judges were well qualified and were supposed to be honest and efficient, and if this was truly so, there was no reason for the withdrawal of the Europeans from under their jurisdiction.

It was to correct this anomalous situation that Macaulay got the above referred to measure enacted. The English community in India fed with the feeling of racial superiority, was not going to put up with this, as it was to be expected. They raised a cry against it, and hurled the worst abuses on Macaulay, calling him a charlatan, swindler, liar and a cheat. With courage and fortitude, however, Macaulay waded his way through. The European Community, carried its agitation from Calcutta to the House of Commons where, in March 1838, a committee of enquiry was called for. But as the Melbourne Ministry supported Macaulay's measure, the motion had to be dropped.

*Education.* In the field of education also Macaulay as the President of the Committee of Public Instructions, did a nice business under Auckland. One of the most important measures of Auckland in this field was the institution of a number of scholarships in the principal Government Schools for the encouragement of the Indian scholars.

Another important measure was the adoption of vernaculars as the medium of instruction to the masses. The Court of Directors had been repeatedly expressing their opinion in its favour, and the Macaulay Committee feeling the need, forwarded a manifesto to the Governor-General as to how it could help. Auckland accepting the vernaculars for the primary schools, put the policy into practice as far as the funds could permit.

Bentinck had founded a Medical College at Calcutta. In order to spread the medical science in this country yet further, Auckland established such colleges in Madras and Bombay. And thus, as far as the circumstances could help, a good foundation for the spread of education was laid.

As a result of Lord Bentinck's Resolution of March 7, as already stated, certain public money grants had been withdrawn from the Indian colleges which taught the classical languages of the East alone. This had caused a serious hardship to scholars studying in these



colleges. Despite the opposition of certain Christian missionaries in India and some other interested elements, in his Minute of November 1839 Lord Auckland declared that Government scholarships would henceforth be made available to these institutions as well.

*A Severe Famine.* During the cold season of 1837-38 a severe famine occurred in the whole of the Doab from Delhi to Allahabad, which turned it into a brown sandy waste. Starvation of the people reached a high pitch so much so that berries, roots, refuse, straw, and even a grain passed undigested by a marching troop-horse was sought after. The severity of the famine is obvious from the fact that about 800,000 people died of hunger, or of disease.

The Government of Auckland encouraged private charity and started relief works at their own cost. Auckland contributed freely from his own pocket, and he was emulated in this by many others.

As a preventive measure against the recurrence of famine, Colonel John Colven of the Bengal Engineers placed an ambitious plan of irrigation before Auckland. Major Cautley (later famous Sir Proby Cautley) was appointed to survey the whole ground, and the Report of 1840 was the result. The plan was sanctioned by the Court of Directors, and soon after this, a committee of three of the best officers of the English Company, namely Abbott, Baker and Cautley, was appointed to make its recommendations on the best means of carrying out the plan. The intervention of the First Afghan War, however, spoiled the programme, the rest of which was carried out only in the time of Lord Hardinge.

*Religious.* Before the time of Auckland, some temples and endowments of the Indians were managed by the English officers. The British troops used to parade at the Indian festivals, salutes were fired, and offerings from the East India Company were made to the Hindu gods; Durga and Jagannath among them being paid a special honour. The times, however, had now changed. The need of placating the Hindus was felt no more, and the establishment of the Company as a sovereign power in India, which was the land of different communities and religions, necessitated a secular policy. Lord Auckland understood the situation, and in April 1840 orders were passed that the temple revenues would now be handed over to the management of the priests, and other relevant agencies, and that the Company's troops would not now be present on any Indian festival, nor would the offerings be made to the Hindu gods. Thus the people were left to themselves in their religious matters.

Lord Auckland also abolished the Pilgrimage Tax, which entailed a loss of £ 30,000 a year to the revenues of the Company.

*Human Sacrifice.* Another development of the time of Lord Auck-

land was the steps taken against the practice of human sacrifice that were prevalent in different parts of the country. The practice existed among certain tribes in the Central Himalayas. Todas of the Nālgiris, the Banjaras who drove herds of cattle all over the country, and many other tribes indulged in this horrible crime to propitiate gods to save them from locusts, drought or other such natural calamities. Even some big zamindars and chieftains indulged in it to safeguard their estates and other interests against the evil intentions of Nature. The ruler of Bastar, for instance, sacrificed as many as twenty-five men at one time in 1830 to urge his gods to grant him some favours. A young man was sacrificed once every year at Poona, and it was a practice with the Raja of Satara that whenever he visited Partabgarh, that an old woman was offered in sacrifice to keep the heavens in good humour.

The practice took different forms with different people. The methods among the Khonds, a primitive tribe who inhabited mountainous areas of Orissa that stretched into Madras as well as Bengal, were thus interesting. The main profession of these people was hunting, though they also applied a half-hearted hand to agriculture. Their victims who were probably kidnapped, or sold away by the needy parents so that the remaining children may be fed, were called Meriahs, and were fattened by the villagers on rich diet for years together till the need arose and each was sacrificed to bring back the clouds which might have strayed away, or the game that might have become scarce.

"The rites would last two or three days," thus writes Philip Woodruff. "The victim, mercifully drunk, was tied to a post, there were dances, there were anointing of his head and strange prayers.... They killed in a different ways in different tribes; in one, the victim—man, woman, boy or girl—was fastened to a pole by his hair and held horizontally above a grave.... in another he was tied to a block of wood.... this was spun round on an axle and the villagers hacked bits from the living victim as he passed. In all forms of the sacrifice, strips of flesh must be torn from the victim to be buried in the fields or slung on a pole above the stream that watered the crops; in all forms the victim was made drunk...."<sup>1</sup>

The crime first came to the notice of the British in 1830. But it was in 1836, in the time of Lord Auckland, when Russell, a civil servant of Madras wrote a lengthy report that the details were known. The Government immediately swung into action. But their initial steps were cautious, lest the religious feelings of the people be inflamed. Captain Campbell was sent into Orissa hills, and he succeeded by persuasions mingled with threats in making the people give up the horrible practice, exclaiming at the same time that henceforth

1. Woodruff, Philip, *op. cit.*, *The Founders*, pp. 249-50.

they would sacrifice animals instead, and tell their gods not to be unhappy with them, and rather visit their wrath upon the man who robbed them of their human sacrifices.

The initial steps being safely taken, the Government determining to get tough, ordered interference in the nick of time, when a whole village may be drunk and worked up into human frenzy, and the victim may be ready to be hacked into pieces, so that it may easily be broadcast that the Government meant business. The crime soon began to disappear.

### RELATIONS WITH THE INDIAN STATES

Lord Auckland did not add any new territories to the possessions of the British in India. His policy towards the Indian States was the policy of securing the British interests with them; in which he was sometimes honest, sometimes aggressive and sometimes even hypocritical, crooked and reckless.

*Oudh.* His relations with Oudh demand our special attention. On 7 July 1837 Nasir-ud-din, the Nawab of Oudh, died, perhaps poisoned by his adoptive mother Padshahi Begum whose son, Munnu Jan he had disowned. After his death the British Resident at Oudh, John Low, tried to place the Nawab's uncle on the throne as the rightful man according to the Muslim law. His assumption of power, however, was resisted by the Begum. The British troops were called in, and when his warnings failed guns were ordered to open fire. About forty of the insurgents were instantaneously killed, while the rest fled. The Begum with her nominee was arrested, and the two were sent as prisoners to Chunar. The British nominee Muhammad Ali was placed on the throne, in return for signing an agreement drawn by Low which stipulated the former's consent to any new treaty which the British might like to impose upon him.

Soon after, the terms of the treaty were drawn up, and though reluctantly, the new Nawab signed this setting aside partially Wellesley's treaty of 1801. The new treaty under an excuse of removing the past abuses, imposed new burdens on the revenues of the state and thus made it more convenient for the abuses to spread.

The treaty laid down that the Nawab would keep in Oudh at his own cost of £ 160,000 a year, a force of two regiments of horse, five of foot and two batteries disciplined and organised by the British officers. This force was never to be used by him for the "ordinary collection of revenue." The treaty also laid down that if any of the districts of Oudh fell into anarchy and misrule, it would be transferred to the control of the British officers for an indefinite time. The revenues collected therefrom would be expended for the good of its

people; surplus, if any, going to the Nawab's treasury.

Unreasonableness of the treaty is obvious. For the maintenance of the British troops the Nawab had to raise money through high rates of revenue and taxation. The paucity of funds was bound to hinder his attempts at an efficient administration, while the people suffering under heavy exactions of money would raise a cry. The net result would be oppression, anarchy and misrule, which in its turn would entail a British interference and their taking over of the administration.

Low objected to such harsh and unreasonable treaty imposed by Auckland on the Nawab, which he said, instead of curing the past abuses would worsen the situation. Nor did the Court of Directors approve of it. And they in a Despatch of April 1839 disallowed the treaty, ordering the decision to be made known to the Nawab immediately. Auckland, however, was not going to accept the reasonableness of this proposal. Although he informed the Nawab that the latter was relieved of the charges for the new auxiliary force, he still permitted him and his ministers to believe that certain clauses of the treaty remained in force. And the Court of Directors also were deceived in this respect.

"Lord Auckland's strange suppression of the truth", writes Trotter, "seems to have misled his countrymen in India, and to have escaped the notice of the powers at home. Neither Lord Hardinge in 1847, nor Colonel Sleeman in 1854, knew that the whole treaty had been annulled. It was left for Lord Dalhousie to discover the truth, as confirmed by Low himself, then a member of his Council, to acquaint the India House with the extent to which Lord Auckland had evaded their commands."<sup>1</sup>

*Satara.* A young representative of the line of Shivaji had been placed on the throne of Satara by Lord Hastings in 1819. In 1822 this young Maharaja came of age, and began to manage the State affairs himself. But soon after this he was alleged to have started intriguing with the Portuguese in Goa, and with Apa Sahib, the banished ex-Raja of Berar, against the British. His desire, as it was alleged, was to free himself from the British shackles. He was repeatedly warned against these activities, but with no effect.

In 1839 Sir James Carnae, the new Governor of Bombay, with proofs of treason supposed to be in his hands, asked the Raja to confess his faults and promise a better behaviour, or otherwise to face the consequences. As the Raja resisted this approach, Auckland issued a proclamation and deposed him. He was taken as a state prisoner to Benaras, and his brother Shahji was put on the throne.

1. Trotter, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

The supporters of the Raja raised a cry in India against this action of the Governor-General. The case was brought before the India House also, and in 1845 Hume brought a motion in the Parliament for a Parliamentary enquiry. The motion, however, was thrown out by a crushing majority, and thus the case fell through. \*

*Sindhia.* Maharaja Jankoji Sindhia remained on good terms with Auckland. He agreed to remodel the Gwalior Contingent as desired by Auckland, and the latter in return restored to him in 1837 those districts of Khandesh which had been taken away from Daulat Rao. In the English campaign against the *Thugs*, and in several other such activities the Maharaja gave his full cooperation. And in 1838 when a Nepalese mission hostile to the British tried to approach him, he turned it out. When Auckland declared a war against Dost Muhammad of Peshawar, Sindhia arrested the Afghan envoy in his court.

Auckland was over-pleased with the loyalty of the Maharaja, and as a mark of appreciation he spent a few days at Gwalior in 1840 on his way back from Simla, exchanging a few courtesies with the prince.

*Indore.* Hari Rao Holkar of Indore was said to have proved incompetent. His state affairs falling into mismanagement, Auckland issued a stern warning to the Maharaja in 1837, asking him to correct the situation failing which the British might assume the charge of his administration. The warning worked, and the Raja recovered with a lightning speed. The administration was improved and Auckland congratulated him for this.

*Karnul.* The Muslim Nawab of Karnul was alleged to have plotted a treason against the British in 1838. The Madras troops marched and took the Nawab a prisoner. He was sent to Trichinopoly where shortly after he was assassinated by a Muslim fanatic. His family was pensioned off, while his dominions were annexed, placed under the 'Regulation' Law after the Mutiny, and made a collectorate of the Madras Presidency.

*Nizam.* Bentinck had recognised the Nizam's claims to manage his own affairs. In the time of Auckland there was a lot of mismanagement in the Nizam's dominions, but he could not be interfered with. In the meanwhile the Afghan war broke out and Auckland's attention was diverted to that side.

### THE FIRST ANGLO-AFGHAN WAR

The Anglo-Afghan relations form one of the most dramatic chapters of the History of Modern India. Lying between the two sprawling empires of England and Russia, Afghanistan was a country

which shook the British pride of invincibility to its roots, and demonstrated to the world as to what a freedom-loving people faced with a superior military power and technique could do.

But unfortunately, brave and intrepid as the Afghans were, they suffered from the same racial defects as any other such people do. If it was difficult for any foreign country to conquer them and rule, it was no less difficult for an internal Government to keep them together, and teach the laws of obedience to a disciplined and properly organised Government. Civil wars and internal dissensions were a trait of their character, and unless there was a magnetic personality to control and arouse their fanaticism for a common cause, which again worked only temporarily, the Afghans kept their mutual jealousies hot.

To assemble the circumstances leading to the war we pick up the threads of history from the close of the 18th century. We find that by that time the Durrani Empire of Afghanistan which had so ambitiously been founded by Ahmed Shah, had begun to rot. Timur Shah (1773-1793), Zaman Shah (1793-1800) and Mahmud Shah (1800-1803), were all inefficient and tactless rulers. Nor was Shah Shuja, who succeeded to the throne in 1803, in any way better. Throughout these history of the Afghan rulers internal rebellions and disorder remained the order of the day. Just when the Amritsar Treaty was signed between the English and the Sikhs in 1809, Elphinstone concluded a Treaty with Shah Shuja as well. But the former had not yet left Peshawar, when Shah Shuja's brother Mahmud Shah captured Kandahar, and soon after defeating the former at Neemla expelled him from Afghanistan.

After this followed a long civil war, at first among the members of the Sadozai family itself to which Mahmud Shah belonged, and then between the Sadozais and the Barakzais. The Barakzais ultimately succeeded in overthrowing the Sadozais and parcelled out the whole country among themselves. Dost Mohammad, the ablest of all the members of this family, occupied Ghazni and Kabul, Kohin Dil Khan occupied Kandahar, and Sultan Mohammad occupied Peshawar. Only Herat remained with Mahmud Shah. Sultan Mohammad later submitted to the Sikhs, when the Sikh forces occupied Peshawar.

With poor resources, freedom-loving people and winding mountains which made the passage into the country very difficult, Afghanistan did not offer any good prospects for the British to occupy. Yet, torn into pieces and vitiated by civil war, Afghanistan offered the best chance to an interested country like Russia to ally with one or the other of the Afghan parties and interfere in the Afghan internal affairs. And it was this that the British in India dreaded the most.

When Lord Auckland arrived in India, the position in Afghanistan was really precarious. Dost Mohammad was the ruler of the main part of Afghanistan, but his position was not very secure. "On the North, there were revolts in Balkh; on the South, one of his brothers was holding out against him at Kandahar; in the East, he was harassed by Ranjit Singh at Peshawar, with Shah Shuja and the British Government in the background; on the West there was Mahmud Shah and Kamran at Herat, with Persia plotting behind and Russia looking in the distance." And to add yet more to his difficulties, Shah Shuja who after being dispossessed of the celebrated jewel Koh-i-nur by Ranjit Singh had gone over under the protection of the British and was getting a pension of Rs. 50,000 a year from them at Ludhiana. He was not suffering his exile alone. There was in fact yet another ex-king of Afghanistan, Zaman Shah, the blind man, who sailed in the same boat. Nor did the British support to them emanate from any spirit of generosity. It was from the wandering Shah Alam that Clive in 1765 had acquired the Dewani which laid the foundation stone of the British empire in India. And the possibilities of the British and Ranjit Singh exploiting these ex-kings against Dost Mohammad were not remote.

In fact repeated efforts already had been made by the interested hands to support Shah Shuja for his reinstatement on the Afghan throne. And Ranjit Singh had evinced in this the keenest interest, for which there were some good reasons which may here briefly be referred to. With the exception of Dera Ghazi Khan, Ranjit Singh possessed no territory beyond Attock where his sovereignty was definitely acknowledged. His subjugation of Peshawar was yet doubtful, and all the area on the bank of the Indus from Attock to the boundary line of Rawalpindi being occupied by the turbulent tribe of Yusufzais, it was the source of a constant menace to the Maharaja. Nor was his sovereignty over Dera Ismail Khan acknowledged any better. And last but not least, the unruly conditions in Afghanistan were no less a source of anxiety. The best solution to all these problems for Ranjit Singh was that he should have his own man on the throne of Afghanistan. And it was for this reason that he was interested in helping Shah Shuja for his reinstatement on the Afghan throne. If Shah Shuja came to the Afghan throne with the help of the Sikh bayonets, the Sikh interests on their North-West Frontiers would be secured. And therefore Ranjit Singh offered his help to the Shah in 1826, which however could not be accepted by the latter because of the British non-approval of the scheme, and because of the Shah's lack of faith in the Sikhs. The second effort of the Shah and the Sikhs together failed in 1829, and the third failed again in 1830. In 1832 the plans for the Shah's march into Afghanistan with the help of the Sikhs actually matured and in the face of the mounting Russian danger in the Middle East the British also gave their green signal. The Shah marched his forces into Afghanistan. But Dost Mohammad being



too strong for him, had to flee the battle-field without even being defeated. The danger to Dost Mohammad from Shah Shuja, however, still had not completely passed away, as we shall presently see.

It was under these conditions in Afghanistan that Lord Auckland came as Governor-General to India. Dost Mohammad feeling that the new Governor-General might be better disposed towards him, wrote him a letter in May 1836, congratulating him on his high appointment. In this letter he narrated his difficulties, particularly with the Sikhs, and expressed his hopes that Lord Auckland would help him remove them, and try particularly to get him Peshawar from Ranjit Singh. But the reply he received was discouraging. Lord Auckland wrote : "My friend, you are aware that it is not the practice of British Government to interfere in the affairs of other independent states."

Thus discouraged Dost Mohammad had to seek out different methods for the solution of his problems. He approached the Shah of Persia for a friendly relation on the one hand, while on the other hand he sent a strong army under the command of his son Akbar Khan in order to recover Peshawar from the Sikhs. In the former, however, he was not serious, as he knew too well the Persian ambitions on Afghanistan. And Persia being in the hands of Russia, he knew that his friendly relations with Persia in antagonism to the British were bound to involve him in troubles not only with the British, but more seriously with the Russians themselves whose territorial ambitions in the Middle East were ever on the increase. His approach to Persia, therefore, was a mere diplomatic manoeuvre. While in his expedition against the Sikhs for the recovery of Peshawar, he had to face nothing but a discomfiture. His problems were therefore not solved this way either, and he was thrown into a trough of confusion.

*Burnes' Commercial Mission.* In the meanwhile the situation for the British also changed. The Anglo-Russian relations were strained, and the mounting Russian ambitions in the Middle East and the strong anti-Russian bias of Palmerston led the Home Government ultimately to plan some action in time lest Russia should expand and knock at the very doors of India. In November 1836 Lord Auckland sent Burnes on a commercial mission to Kabul. Though the declared purpose of this mission was to explore possibilities of some sort of commerce between India and Afghanistan, in reality its aim was strictly political, as a letter of Lord Auckland dated 6 January 1838 clearly showed. The plan to play politics in the guise of a commercial agent is said to have been suggested to Auckland for the first time by Sir John Malcolm, and it is also suggested that Auckland sent Burnes on a commercial mission strictly on his own responsibility. But this is wrong. The dispatch of the Secret Committee of the Directors sent to Auckland in June 1836 and brought



to light for the first time by John Russell Colvin in 1894 clearly shows that the suggestion came for the first time from the Directors, and for its consequences Lord Auckland could not entirely be held responsible. The dispatch for instance directed Auckland in clear words : "to judge as to what steps it may be proper and desirable for you to take, to watch more closely than has hitherto been attempted, progress of events in Afghanistan and counteract the progress of Russian influence in a quarter which, from its proximity to our Indian possession could not fail, if it were once established, to act injuriously on the system of our Indian alliances, and possibly to interfere even with the tranquillity of our own territory. The mode of dealing with this very important question, whether by dispatching a confidential agent to Dost Mohammad of Kabul merely to watch the progress of events, or to enter into relations with the Chief either of a political or merely, in the first instance, of a commercial character, we confide to your discretion the time has arrived at which it would be right for you to interfere decidedly in the affairs of Afghanistan. Such an interference would doubtless be requisite, whether to prevent the extension of Persian domination to that quarter, or to raise a timely barrier against the impending encroachments of Russian influence."

Thus, as Archbold writes, Lord Auckland in fact "came out as the-exponent of the views of others...his own opinions, had he dared to assert them, were in the main more sensible."<sup>1</sup>

Burnes, professing to be strictly a commercial agent, started from the Delta of the Indus, and sailing up through the Punjab and passing through Peshawar he reached Kabul in September 1837, where he was given a warm reception by Dost Mohammad. The negotiations for an alliance between Dost Mohammad and the British were started, and they had not concluded when a further urgency was added to the political character of Burnes' Mission. The British had signed a treaty with Persia in 1809, by which they had promised to help her in case of any trouble with Russia. But when Russia attacked Persia in 1826, the British refused to fulfil the pledge; and Persia thus was forced to sign the treaty of Turkoman-chai with Russia in 1828 by which the former, as Kaye writes<sup>2</sup>, was handed over to the latter. But what made the problem serious for the British was that in November 1837 Muhammad Mirza, the Shah of Persia, laid a siege on Herat. And since Persia was almost under the control of Russia, this action of the Shah of Persia was identified with the Russian ambitions in Afghanistan.

Dost Mohammad was not blind to the British attitude towards the Middle East problems, and thus instead of developing serious apprehensions at the face of the Persian siege of Herat, he seems to

1. *Cambridge History of India*, v, p. 490.
2. *Kaye, History of War in Afghanistan*; I, pp. 151-56,

have grown bolder. He agreed very willingly to sign an alliance with the British, but he forwarded two terms for this. Firstly, he wanted a promise from the British that they would help him in the recovery of Peshawar from the Sikhs, and secondly, that they would come to his help in case of any Persian invasion of Kabul and Kandahar. While the British could accept the second condition, it was difficult to do so with the first.

Burnes communicated the views of Dost Mohammad to Lord Auckland, forwarding his own opinion that if the British put some pressure on Ranjit Singh to give up Peshawar, he would most probably agree; because, he held, Ranjit Singh's trans-Indus possessions were costing him heavily in terms both of money and lives, and with some diplomacy the problem could be solved in favour of Dost Mohammad. Burnes' arguments, however, did not appeal to Auckland. The latter was sure that Ranjit Singh was already bitter against the aggressive British policy both in the cis-Sutlej territories and Sind. And if the British evinced any active interest in the Afghan efforts to recover Peshawar, the limit of Ranjit Singh's toleration would be reached. Moreover, even if Dost Mohammad was assisted in securing Peshawar, his friendship could not strictly be relied upon; and Auckland was not prepared to exchange the sure Sikh friendship for the doubtful one of the Afghans. Nor did he want that the settlement of the Peshawar problem should actually remove the existing bitterness between the Sikhs and the Afghans, for in that case Ranjit Singh would have nothing more to keep busy the major part of his army on the North-West Frontiers. He would grow bolder against the British, and would concentrate his forces against them. In such circumstances, therefore, the British simply wanted Dost Mohammad to break off his contacts with Persia and Russia. In return, however, they would commit themselves neither to protect him against these countries whose hostility he was sure to incur, nor to help him to recover Peshawar from the Sikhs.

When thus, the British attitude towards his proposals was made clear, Dost Mohammad's cordiality toward Burnes began to diminish. The Russian agent, Viktevitch, was already in Kabul. In the beginning Dost Mohammad had given him the cold shoulder, but now he was called in and received with a special honour. The Mission of Burnes having failed, he left for India on 26 April 1838.

In the meanwhile Lord Auckland's reaction towards these developments was bitter. In his minute of 12 May 1838 he analysed the situation and declared that in the existing circumstances there were three alternatives before the British. First, that Afghanistan and Persia should be left to their fate and that the British should concentrate their forces on the Indus. Second, that the Amirs of Kabul and Kandahar should be subsidised and Afghanistan should be made

into a barrier against the Russian ambitions. And third, that Ranjit Singh should be encouraged to organise an expedition under Shah Shuja and invade Afghanistan. Of these three alternatives, if the first was adopted it would mean a total reversal of the policy so far followed, which would amount in clear words to a sort of political suicide for the British in Central Asia. The second alternative had already been attempted but proved abortive. Now, of these three therefore only the third alternative was left which Lord Auckland had to follow. The recommendation to the effect was duly made to the Home authorities and their consent secured.

*Tripartite Treaty.* Shah Shuja, as referred to above, had already made his efforts to occupy the Afghan throne in 1832, but had failed. And one reason for this failure was the half-hearted help given to him both by the British and Ranjit Singh. Under the changed circumstances the British themselves now took the initiative and proposed a Tripartite Treaty between the British, the Sikhs and Shah Shuja for the latter's reinstatement on the Afghan throne. The terms of the Treaty were that : (1) Shah Shuja and his successors would never claim in future any territory on either bank of the river Indus, and Ranjit Singh's claims on Peshawar would be recognised. (2) None of the three would give shelter to the absconders from other's territory. (3) Ranjit Singh would be permitted a supply of water from the Khyber streams for his fort of Fatehgarh. (4) The Maharaja would have a full control over the Indus as far as his territories on it stretched. (5) Shah Shuja would recognise all the agreements arrived at with regard to Sind, between the English and the Sikhs. (6) All the three would address one another on the basis of equality. (7) Afghan merchants would trade with Lahore and Amritsar and Ranjit Singh would extend them full protection, and also permit the export of the articles such as shawls and rice from his country. (8) Wherever the soldiers of the two countries meet, they would abstain from kine-slaughter. (9) Both Afghanistan and the Punjab would have a frequent exchange of missions. (10) Both would give mutual help to each other in case of internal risings and external dangers. (11) Enemies of one would be considered enemies of the other two. (12) Ranjit Singh would supply 500 soldiers for the restoration of Shah Shuja on the Kabul throne, and would get in return a price of two lakhs of rupees. (13) Shah Shuja would not have any relations with a foreign country without the consent of the British and the Sikhs, and would resist any army advancing through Afghanistan. (14) Herat would be independent, and lastly, (15) Shah Shuja would receive a British envoy at Kabul.

It was contemplated that the British would not send their soldiers for Shah Shuja's help. They would rather give him a pecuniary aid to raise soldiers and prepare an army. British officers, of course, would be supplied to direct the Shah's army. Also that Ranjit Singh would march his troops separately and according to his own plan.

In other words, as Dr R.R. Sethi remarks, the British "stipulated nothing more in the Treaty than money for the Shah, British officers for his army and agents for accompanying the expedition."<sup>1</sup>

These conditions could be quite acceptable to the Maharaja, but later on when it was made clear to him that his claims on Shikarpur would not be allowed, Sind would remain independent of all the three powers and that Jallalabad would also not be permitted to be occupied by him as he desired; and yet further, when the British also decided to send their troops to support the Shah, Ranjit Singh smelt a rat in the scheme and refused to sign the Treaty. But when the British threatened to go it alone, the Maharaja had to give way.<sup>2</sup>

The Treaty was signed in 1838, but before Shah Shuja could march for Afghanistan, on 9 September 1838 the Persians withdrew from Herat, and the Russian agent Vikteich was recalled and his mission was denounced by the Russian Government as unofficial. The whole argument for sending the expedition to Afghanistan thus fell, and the Home authorities advised a caution. But determined in his hot blood as Auckland was to teach Dost Muhammad a lesson, he proclaimed his determination to carry his plans through "for the substitution of a friendly for a hostile power in the Eastern provinces of Afghanistan, and for the establishment of a permanent barrier against schemes of aggression against the north-west frontier."

*The War.* A huge force, called the "Army of Indus", and consisting of a brigade each of artillery and cavalry and five of infantry, was thus assembled at Ferozepur towards the close of November. Sir Henry Fane, the Commander-in-Chief who was opposed to the sending of this expedition, was retired on account of bad health, and in his place was appointed John Keane. The Bengal troops were to be commanded by Sir Willoughby Cotton, Macnaughten was to be the British envoy at Shah Shuja's court, and Sir Alexander Burnes to be in charge of the political affairs of the expedition. Besides, the expedition was also to be accompanied by other diplomats who would conclude a host of alliances with the Central Asian Powers. Ranjit Singh having refused to permit the British troops to march through the Punjab, it was decided to send them through Bahawalpur, Sind, Baluchistan, and the Bolan and the Khyber passes. This was a plan, which according to Dr V.A. Smith, "violated all conditions of sound strategy, and was that of a lunatic rather than of a sane statesman."<sup>3</sup> The weakness of the Amirs of Sind was exploited to its fullest extent, neither any moral scruples nor political agreements already arrived at were permitted to stand in Auckland's way. The protests of the

1. Sethi, R.R., *The Mighty and Shrewd Maharaja*, pp. 214-19.

2. See Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 192.

3. Smith, *Oxford History of India* pp. 603-606.

Amirs were treated only as useless pranks, and the British forces marched cutting through the heart of Sind, on to Afghanistan.

The story of the expedition from here onwards may only briefly be related. The whole force reached Quetta on 6 March 1839. The fanatic Afghan tribes were lavishly bribed to make the British progress smooth. Shah Shuja entered Qandhar in April, and on 7 August he marched smoothly into Kabul, Dost Muhammad having vacated the latter place four days before. Dost Muhammad however being popular with his people, Shah Shuja's entry into Kabul was received with bitter feelings, it being only, as Kaye writes, like a "funeral procession than the entry of a king into the capital of his restored dominions."<sup>1</sup> Dost Muhammad having surrendered himself to Macnaughten in November 1839 whereafter he was sent as an honoured prisoner to Calcutta, the British victory in Afghanistan was complete.

*Problems and Blunders.* The story of the British in Afghanistan from here onwards is the story only of strategical and moral blunders. Once thus established, the greatest problem before the British now was how to retain what they had so easily acquired. Shah Shuja being extremely unpopular for his bringing in that country the enemies of Islam, the withdrawal of the British troops from Afghanistan was bound to imperil not only the prospects of Shah, but also the British prestige. While on the other hand the continuous stay of the British troops in Afghanistan was a less attractive proposition both from the financial and the strategical points of view. Not only had the British to incur heavy expenditure, they also had to run the great danger of surprise Afghan attacks. For though the Afghans could be subdued by superior arms, they could never be reconciled to a position of fear and dependence for long. The situation was perplexing.

It was ultimately decided to keep 10,000 soldiers in Afghanistan, divided in the garrisons of Kabul, Qandhar, Ghazni and Jallalabad; the remainder to be retired to India. But as time slowly now passed, the British grew foolishly complacent. Ranjit Singh died in June 1839, before Shah Shuja even entered Kabul, "and his death seriously endangered the British communications, for the Sikhs were soon in a state of disaffection." Some of the Sikh chiefs were even said to have started intriguing with the Afghans. The Khyber was unsafe, for the tribe inhabiting around it was kept in order only by force and bribery, none of which could be continued for long. The passage through the Punjab being refused, and the Punjab now perhaps being hostile, the feeling of isolation should have plagued the responsible British minds. Besides, the dual Government of the British and Shah Shuja robbed many an Afghan chief of his political

1. Kaye, *History of War in Afghanistan*, I, p. 124.

power and prestige, and a slow simmering among them began to rise. The only executive action of the Government under the circumstances being the collection of taxes, with no benefit to the people in return, the discontentment among the people began to develop. The Indian army in Afghanistan could not be much relied upon. But still the expenses of the British mounted with every day that passed. As the financial burden on the Indian Government grew intolerable, the financial resources in Afghanistan being slender, the lavish bribes to the Afghan tribes began to disappear which made the British position in Afghanistan yet more precarious. Yet, complacent in their attitude of mind, the licentiousness of some British officers like Burnes increased. Strangely enough, what Auckland in India could not sense, the Home authorities did, and advised him in a Dispatch of 1840 either to increase the strength of the British forces in Afghanistan or to withdraw completely. But either in the carelessness of his attitude, or foolishness of calculations, Auckland refused to pay heed.

And then about this time some blunders were committed which ultimately spelled the British ruin in Afghanistan. In April 1841 General Elphinstone, an elderly and invalid man hardly even able to walk, as he himself admitted, was made to succeed Sir Willoughby Cotton, and this was, as Archbold writes, "one of the most serious mistakes that Auckland committed." "Nott a man of will and resource, if of strong temper," he further comments, "would have been a better choice."<sup>1</sup> Further, the troops at Kabul were moved to the ill-constructed and ill-fortified cantonments outside the city, instead of placing them in Bala Hissar, the palace citadel of Kabul, which was given over to Shah Shuja for his seraglio. And the commissariat stores were placed separately at a distance, which was a serious blunder for which both Cotton and Macnaughten were responsible. Macnaughten's ignorance of the military strategy and his carelessness about his business were indeed appalling. He "made light of the warnings from every outpost," write Thompson and Garratt, and at the very time when a formidable conspiracy was meeting constantly in Kabul, he wrote while commenting on a grim little fight which came close to a disaster, that he "hoped the business ..was the expiring effort of the rebels..."<sup>2</sup>

The estimates showed that if the British were to continue in Afghanistan as such, it would cost them a minimum of Rs 1½ m. a year, and Shah Shuja was after all not worth that much expenditure. An economy was recommended by the Home authorities, and unfortunately, and unwisely, the best economy was thought to be the decrease of stipends to the various Afghan leaders by which alone

1. *Cambridge History of India*, v. p. 491-2.

2. Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 309.



their support for the British had been secured. The economy resulted into an immediate reaction. The Ghilzai chiefs leaving Kabul, took a stand near Jallalabad and began to plunder. A conspiracy was already afoot in which the leaders of almost all the tribes were involved, and the rumours of a general uprising floated about; but strangely enough the British in their slumber could know of it only when the storm almost broke out, and when it was utterly difficult to stem it. The universal, the religious, and the national opinion of Afghanistan was against Shah Shuja having come in Afghanistan with the support of a foreign power. The British were their enemies who had come to destroy their honour and self-respect. The propaganda slowly gathered strength. Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Muhammad, who had a daring energy and "all the characteristics of his savage race," as Archbold writes,<sup>1</sup> was recognised the leader of the rebellion. There was a lull, and then the storm broke out.

*The Disaster.* In November 1841 a mob of one hundred Afghans attacked the house of Burnes at Kabul and murdered him in cold blood. For the lack of transport General Nott at Qandhar could not move to Kabul. And General Sale at Gandamak moved instead to Jallalabad. The English got a signal defeat at Bamaru on 23 November, and Macnaughten was forced to sign a humiliating treaty on December 11, 1841, by which the British were to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan by 22 December; Dost Muhammad and the other Afghan leaders who had been imprisoned would be released; Shah Shuja would be given the option either to stay on as an ordinary citizen or go with the English; and four British officers were to be given over to the Afghans as hostages.

After signing this treaty Macnaughten deliberately delayed his departure from Afghanistan, and this cost him his life. This caused a complete confusion in the ranks of the British, they ratified the treaty on 1 January 1842 and surrendered their muskets, guns and ordnance and on the 6th of that month the retreat of the British forces and their camp followers, the total number being 16,000, began. They relied upon Akbar Khan for their safe passage, but he was either unwilling or incapable of protecting them, with the result that Ghilzais and other ferocious tribesmen swarmed round the line of retreat and made the best use of their deadly weapons upon the retreating soldiers. Such was the confusion in the British ranks that they could not take even the most ordinary precautions for maintaining discipline. One General after another fell victim to the Afghan treachery, and the general mass of soldiers lost their morale. They surrendered Pottinger, Elphinstone and some other officers and women and children as hostages to Akbar Khan, while the rest marched on under the shower of bullets. As the retreat became a route, the route became 'a massacre'. A last and desperate stand was

1. *Cambridge History of India*, v, pp. 491-92.

made at the Jagdalak Pass, but nothing could save the British from utter destruction. With the exception of 120 prisoners in Akbar Khan's hands, of the 16,000 only one lucky man, Dr Brydon completely exhausted and half dead because of his severe wounds, was able to reach Jallalabad. Such was the heart-rending tale, full of woes and of ultimate destruction of the retreating British soldiers.

Generally, the British writers blamed Akbar Khan for having acted in a treacherous manner and caused this destruction of the retreating soldiers. Dr Ishwari Prasad and S.K. Subedar, however, hold that our "sympathies with the massacred unarmed soldiers in the winding defiles of Afghanistan, should not blind us to the fact that it was their brethren in other parts of the country who had brought this fate upon them."<sup>1</sup> According to these writers, it was the refusal of the British forces at Qandhar, Ghazni, and Jallalabad to act over the treaty signed by Elphinstone which infuriated the Afghans. The argument of the British authorities was that the term of complete evacuation applied only to the forces of Elphinstone, and that the latter had no right to commit the other forces to this agreement. While on the other hand the Afghans held that the term implied the evacuation of all the British troops. The views of these writers, however may not be accepted as the whole truth. The facts are that the restoration of the unwanted man in place of Dost Muhammad who was popular among the Afghans, was taken by these brave men as a serious attack upon their pride and sense of self-respect and they had desired to teach the British a lesson, so that in future they should never turn their face towards their beloved land. Nor in this particular case can it be suggested that the Afghans were completely incapable of a treachery. It was in fact all the factors as mentioned above, which combined together, and to them being added some of the most serious blunders of Elphinstone himself, the lack of proper discipline and failure to keep courage and sense of understanding in this circumstance of utter difficulty, which ultimately led to such complete destruction of Elphinstone's force.

*Ellenborough.* While Elphinstone's force met the above fate, General Nott was able to hold on at Qandhar. General England who came to relieve him, was defeated at Hakalzai, but General Nott having rushed out and met General England, the forces of the two effected a junction. Ghazni under Palmer was besieged by the Afghans after this and made to capitulate. General Sale had been besieged at Jallalabad, but he was able to hold on till the reinforcement under General Pollock arrived. Before General Pollock the first relief force under Wyld which had entered the Khyber, and even captured the fort of Ali Masjid, had already been forced to fall back. And therefore Pollock's success reversed the situation in favour of the British.

1. Prasad and Subedar, *The History of Modern India*, p. 217.



But the achievement of Pollock fell rather to the credit of Lord Ellenborough, and not of Lord Auckland who had by this time been recalled to give place to the former. Lord Ellenborough who succeeded in February 1842 came to India, writes Roberts, "with a considerable reputation, and was undoubtedly a much abler man than his predecessor...He was a ready and eloquent speaker of a somewhat florid type, self-confident, impulsive, and rather headstrong, so that even his friend the Duke of Wellington found it necessary to warn him of the need of 'caution and temper'."<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after his arrival in India, the first impulse of Lord Ellenborough was to give a signal defeat to the Afghans to retrieve the British prestige. But not even a month had passed when the defeats of General England at Hikalzai and Palmer's surrender at Ghazni made him rather too cold. Without giving the matter the deep thought that it deserved, he determined on an immediate evacuation and ordered Pollock to withdraw to Peshawar, and Nott to abandon Qandhar. The order fell upon these Generals "like a thunderclap." In fact after the junction of Pollock and Sale at Jallalabad, and Nott's success in not holding on at Qandhar but also in the infliction of some losses on the Afghans, the situation in Afghanistan had materially changed. But Lord Ellenborough having the habit of acting on impulses, had failed to realise it. The Generals however acted wisely, and on the plea of the lack of transport delayed their movements. In the meanwhile the outburst of indignation in India against the Governor-General's acting against the expert advice and failure to keep the advantage secured in Afghanistan brought Ellenborough to the sense of reality, and he issued new orders which, though worded ambiguously, implied an action of the Generals as they thought fit in their circumstances. These orders were taken by Ellenborough's critics as an attempt to evade responsibility. The Generals in the field, however, did not hesitate in accepting the position, and in trying to retrieve the situation yet further. Ellenborough also was now emboldened, and hinting upon the possible reconquest of Kabul and Ghazni, he wrote to them that if they proceeded, "you will bring away from the tomb of Mahmud Ghazni, his club which hangs over it, and you will bring away the gates of his tomb, which are the gates of the temple of Somnath. These will be the just trophies of your successful march."

For the wise and seasoned Generals Pollock and Nott this hint was sufficient. The latter moved out of Qandhar and the former out of Jallalabad to meet at Kabul. After defeating Akbar Khan at Tehzin, Pollock entered Kabul on September 15, while Nott joined him just two days later. On his way to Kabul Nott had destroyed the fortification of Ghazni and brought away the gates of the tomb of Mahmud Ghazni which were supposed to have been brought from

1, Roberts, *History of British India*, p. 322

the temple of Somnath in 1024. The victorious British troops were also able to rescue the European prisoners whom their guards had been hurrying from one place to another. These successes, however, intoxicated the Generals who forgetting and flouting every rule of moral strategy, committed on 12 October a folly and barbaric crime for which posterity will never forgive them. It was "an inexcusable act of vandalism," as Roberts writes, that "the great bazar of Kabul was blown up"<sup>1</sup> and the city was utterly sacked. After this, satisfied in their cruel lust for having retrieved the prestige of the British arms, the General evacuated.

In the meanwhile much effort was made by Ellenborough in India with his proclamations to do the face-saving for the British. To conceal the facts that the British were really incapable of keeping on in Afghanistan even after they had conquered it, Ellenborough declared that they had no territorial ambitions in that country and they were contented with the natural limits of the empire. He proclaimed on 10 October therefore that the British will "leave it to the Afghans themselves to create a Government amidst the anarchy which was the consequence of their crime."

In yet another proclamation which should better have never been made, he told the princes and chiefs of India that the British had brought back the gates of Somnath thereby avenging the insult of 800 years. This proclamation while pleasing none, offended many. The Hindus were not pleased because the gates brought away from Ghazni did not actually belong to Somnath. On the other hand the Muslims of India were seriously offended for the Governor-General's act of partisanship against them. A grand display of troops was held at Ferozepur with "triumphal arches and histrionic pageants of victory." And here the Governor-General received the returning forces with great pomp. The whole attempt was in fact nothing but an attempt to wipe away the tears of an utterly humiliating failure in Afghanistan, and to dress up the British defeat into artificial colours of victory. The British position in fact was now worse than it was before the Afghan war. Dost Muhammad came back where he was, while the British not only failed in keeping Shah Shuja on the Afghan throne, they rather lost him forever. For the wretched Shah Shuja fell by the hand of an assassin on 5 April 1842, and though the British were no poorer without him, they lost their professed friend on whom they had pinned high hopes to be realised in the Central Asian countries.

Commenting on the First Afghan War, thus writes Kaye: "No failure so total and so overwhelming as this is recorded in the pages

1. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

of history. No lesson so grand and impressive is to be found in all the annals of the world." When the British left that country, they did not leave her as their friend. They rather left, as Kaye may again be quoted, "every town and village of Afghanistan bristling with enemies of the English while the British disaster in that country encouraged anew the aggressions of the Persian and the intrigues of his Muscovite ally." Nor had India to suffer less. "It is upon record that this calamitous war cost the natives of India, whose stewards we are, some fifteen millions of money. All this enormous burden fell upon the revenues of India, and the country for long years afterwards groaned under the weight."<sup>1</sup> The loss of men was 20,000, and this was no less stupendous.

"Viewed, indeed, in whatever respect," thus writes Trotter, "that policy was at once a blunder and a crime. Shah Shuja had repeatedly declared his unwillingness to re-enter Kabul as a king who owed his crown to British bayonets and British guns. Our concord with the Sikhs depended on the will of a 'drunken old profligate', (Ranjit Singh) as Miss Eden called him, whose death might be expected at any moment. The march of our troops through Sind involved the need of forcing the rulers of that country, in the teeth of existing treaties, to expedite the passage of those troops with a due provision of carriage and supplies. The Army of the Indus would have to depend during its march partly on its own supplies, partly on such help as the rulers of the countries traversed might be induced to afford. For the latter purpose it soon became needful to employ the methods commonly adopted by the strong against the weak... Even the friendly Nawab of Bhawalpur... was bullied and lectured into furnishing the requisite supplies while Burnes was engaged in teaching the Amirs of Khairpur in Upper Sind a lesson of prompt obedience to the demands of their new allies."<sup>2</sup>

From beginning till the end the whole plan of the Afghan War was conceived in folly, conducted in folly and concluded in folly. In this Lord Auckland acted without consulting his Council, he acted in opposition to the advice of his Commander-in-Chief and against the wishes of the Board of Control. And then, the Russian danger in the Central Asia was too exaggerated. As McNeill, the British Minister to Persia remarked in 1836, a Russian regiment "at her farthest frontier post, on the Western shore of the Caspian, has as great a distance to march back to Moscow as onward to Attock on the Indus, and is actually farther from St. Petersburg than from Lahore, the capital of the Sikhs."<sup>3</sup> And the British knew that to conduct wars at such large distances in those times was not an easy job. Yet the very mention of the name of Russia in connection with a Central Asian

1. See Kaye, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-33; Roberts, *op. cit.*

2. Trotter, L.J., *The Earl of Auckland*, pp. 75-76.

3. See Norris, J.A., *The First Afghan War, 1838-1842*.

country robbed the British of their sense of farsightedness and made them act in an amateurish manner. Auckland, unfortunately, was no exception to this. The bitter failure of the Russian expedition to Khiva in November 1839 showed indeed as to how exaggerated the dread of the Russian power the British had.

Nor was the Persian siege of Herat completely unjustified. Kamaran, the ruler of Herat, in fact had repeatedly violated his treaties with Persia and carried inroads into her territories. The Shah of Persia therefore had a just cause in attacking Herat. Nor did he aspire to annex that city to his own dominions. In fact had he succeeded, as Trotter writes, "that city would have been handed over to the Qandhar chiefs, who were ready to hold it for their Barakzai brother at Kabul."<sup>1</sup>

And then, as Roberts writes, "even such poor excuse as the framers of the policy originally had was swept away by the course of events before they were finally committed to it."<sup>2</sup> The British expedition to Karrak in the Persian Gulf alarmed the Shah of Persia, and he raised his siege of Herat on 9 September 1838. The Russians disowned and withdrew their agent under pressure from England; and Viktevitch, returning in disgrace and chagrin to St. Petersburg, shot himself dead. This was the best opportunity for the British to withdraw with honour. But as the devil of war danced on Auckland's head, the opportunity was lost with disastrous consequences.

Nor was Dost Muhammad whom they wanted to replace with Shah Shuja on the Afghan throne, an incapable ruler. He was popular among the Afghans and was an independent ruler in whose internal affairs and external policy the British had no right to interfere. The justifications of a war against Dost Muhammad which Auckland gave in his minute on 1 October 1838 were in fact incorrect. Here, as Sir Herbert Edwardes wrote, "the views and conduct of Dost Muhammad Khan were misrepresented with a hardihood which a Russian statesman might have envied." On the other hand, the estimate drawn of the capabilities of Shah Shuja was extremely exaggerated. He was distrusted and disliked by the Afghans who hated his attempts to come back on the Afghan throne with the help of the English and the Sikh infidels. Expelled from Afghanistan in 1809, he had already made two attempts to come back, but had bitterly failed. He in fact was a man only of mediocre talent, and the British attempt to replace Dost Muhammad with Shah Shuja was a folly against the Afghan nation.

Some of the greatest British statesmen of the day had in fact warned Auckland against his policy already before the war began. Among

1. Trotter, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
2. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

them was Lord Bentinck, Wellesley, Sir Charles Metcalfe and Elphinstone, and they all predicted British failure in their venture in Afghanistan. The prophecy of the Duke of Wellington was remarkable indeed. He warned that once the British crossed the Indus to settle a government in Afghanistan, that would entail upon them a "perennial march into that country."<sup>1</sup> This proved to be correct. But Auckland in his fury to settle his accounts with Dost Muhammad was in no mood to listen to these timely warnings.

British actions in Afghanistan were planned in haste and executed in a hurry. It seems almost all the decisions of Auckland in connection with the Afghan War, and more so those of his successor Lord Ellenborough, were more impulsive than deliberative. Auckland's choice of Generals, comments Trotter, "ill-fitted for their work. Macnaughten's cheery trustfulness, Elphinstone's bodily and mental decay, Shelton's stupid wilfulness, chronic dissensions between civil and military powers, Sale's withholding of timely succour, all conspired with Lord Auckland's half-measures and ill-timed economies to work out the dramatic nemesis of an enterprise begun in folly and wrong doing."<sup>2</sup> Nor could Auckland's ignoring of military supplies across the hostile countries and subordination of military interests to politicians like Macnaughten be excused.

The blunders that the ill-chosen Generals of Auckland committed in Afghanistan were in fact strong factors which ultimately resulted in the British disaster. The dual Government established in Afghanistan which was concerned only with the collection of taxes, and which made no effort to placate the public opinion, was a mistake. But the British failure to watch the discontented public opinion, and failure to set up a proper machinery which could spy on the Afghan conspiracies was a blunder. Their action in moving the British troops at Kabul into the ill-constructed and ill-fortified cantonments outside the city, and handing over of Bala Hissar, the palace citadel of Kabul, to Shah Shuja for his seraglio was a folly. And the irresponsibility of the responsible British officers like Burnes, and their licentiousness in such surroundings was a crime which could never indeed be forgiven.

The mistakes of the Generals and other responsible officers did not end at this. No efforts were made to maintain discipline among the soldiers, and a complete loss of courage in the face of danger spelled ruin. "The failure was turned into disaster by grave military blunders",<sup>3</sup> but for which the British prestige may not perhaps have received such a severe jolt.

Then, the way the British troops were marched through Bhopal

1. See Norris, J.A. *op. cit.*

2. Trotter, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

3. Ramsay Muir, *Making of British India*, p. 309.

and Sind, and the cruel manner by which the treaties signed with them were violated, this was not a thing of credit which Auckland could be proud to own. V.A. Smith comments : "Auckland had not the sense to see the truth and was led away to break the treaties only six years' old, to bully the weak; to pursue a fanatic policy;... to violate the principles of strategy; to throw thousands of lives by entrusting them to an incapable commander; and finally at last to acquiesce silently in the garbling of the documents submitted for the information of Parliament."<sup>1</sup>

Auckland "was a good man of business, an assiduous reader of papers....," writes Prinsep, "but he was wanting in promptness of decision, and an overwearing dread of responsibility, which caused the instructions he gave, which were often penned by himself, to be so unsatisfactory that his agents had generally to decide for themselves what to do in difficulty."<sup>2</sup>

Lord Auckland was said "to have yielded too much to his Private Secretary (John Colvin), who on occasions...would take the whole initiative of the discussion while his lordship sat listening with his hand at the back of his head; and got the nickname of Lord Colvin among the younger Civil Servants."

Nor did Lord Ellenborough prove better in this respect. His two proclamations were a proof of his weakness, a proof of the lack of self-confidence. Commenting on this Auckland remarked that he "had been convinced that Lord Ellenborough was mad from the moment of his landing." The folly of the proclamations came yet more on the surface when it was discovered that the so-called gates of Somnath did not actually belong to that temple.

Commenting on Lord Ellenborough's activities in India, Lord Macaulay said in the House of Commons, on 19 March 1843 : "We have sometimes sent them Governors whom they loved, and sometimes Governors whom they feared, but they never before had a Governor at whom they laughed."

The First Afghan War, indeed, as writes Innes, was "The most unqualified blunder committed in the whole history of the British India."<sup>3</sup> Yet, when all is said, we must not forget that whatever Ellenborough did he did only to rectify the blunders that had been committed in the time of Lord Auckland; and that for the policy that Auckland followed in this country, he was not alone to blame. Indeed there might be a truth in the assertion of Archbold, according to whom the careful study of the papers show that Auckland's policy

1. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 603-606.

2. Prinsep, *op. cit.*, 356.

3. *Cumbrilge History of India*, p. 490, further see *ibid.* Chapter XXVIII; Kaye, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1.

was dictated by the Home authorities, and that had he been permitted to work of his own, he might have been wiser than what he proved to be.

Lord Auckland was recalled from India in 1842, and shortly after his arrival in England, Lord Russell gave him place in his Cabinet, appointing him the First Lord of Admiralty once again. The Afghan reverses, however, had told heavily on his health, and on 1 January 1849 he was suddenly claimed by death. He having never married, his earldom after him was forfeited.

Charles Grenville remarked about Auckland : "his understanding was excellent, his temper placid, his taste and tact exquisite, his disposition, notwithstanding his apparent gravity, cheerful, and under his cold exterior there was a heart overflowing with human kindness, and with the deepest feeling of affection, charity, and benevolence."<sup>1</sup> But while his so-called 'Black Act,' his education policy, famine and religious policies which belonged to the domestic affairs, deserve the highest praise; his cunningness towards Oudh, and pure and naked aggression towards Afghanistan deserve the worst condemnation. He was a man, as said above, who could do best in times of peace, while in times of war and a serious emergency he probably lost his balance of judgement and invited disrepute rather than fame.

1. See Kaye, *History of War in Afghanistan*, i. p. 123.

# 5

## Raja Ranjit Singh 1780-1839

### THE RISE OF RANJIT SINGH TO POWER

An important event of the time of Lord Auckland was the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839. Before proceeding to the next Governor-General of India, it would be interesting to have a short account of the rise of this ruler of Punjab to power, and of certain other facts related to him. Ranjit Singh, son of the brave and enterprising young Sukerchakia chief Maha Singh, was born on 2 November 1780. He was only a child when he got an attack of small-pox which, although he survived, left permanent marks on his body and deprived him of one of his eyes. "The one-eyed boy", as Gordon wrote of him, "grew up short of stature, and as chief of a Misl he seemed what might be called a "sport" among the stalwart jats who surrounded him."<sup>1</sup>

The boy did not interest himself much in books. His tutors Bhai Phagan Singh and Daula Singh tried their best to educate him but they failed, and therefore all "the knowledge he gained in his childhood related to field sports and the art of war, in both of which he displayed the daring ability which marked his subsequent career."<sup>2</sup> In fact in this his father had quite a high opinion regarding his son who accompanied him on several expeditions, and about whom he once remarked : "The state of Gujranwala will not be a sufficient kingdom for my brave son Ranjit Singh. He will one day carve out a great empire for himself "

Ranjit Singh was only 12 years of age when his father died, and he being too young yet, the affairs of state fell in the hands of his mother and Diwan Lakhpat Rai. None of these being fit to rule, the administration fell into disrepute, till Ranjit Singh was 17 and he

1. Gordon, *The Sikhs*, p. 83.

2. Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 71.



decided to assume the powers direct, setting aside his guardians who had misguided and ill-served him. Dal Singh, the maternal uncle of Ranjit Singh's father, was appointed Prime Minister of the State, and the young boy started his political career forthwith.

All that was beautiful in the Punjab, wrote Princep, had died before Ranjit Singh was born. And when he ascended the throne, there was nothing in the Punjab but confusion and chaos that ruled supreme. Disintegration of the Mughal Empire and the repeated invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali had broken up the Punjab into shreds. Different Sikh leaders had carved out for themselves small principalities at different places, so that when Ranjit Singh acceded to power there were in the Punjab, as many as twelve small Sikh states, or *Misls* as they were called, one of which was the Sukerchakia *Misl* to which Ranjit Singh himself belonged. Besides there were seven small Muslim states, one small Hindu state and several very petty principalities which dotted the map of the Punjab.<sup>1</sup> In fact the Punjab at this time was a congeries of small states and other warring groups open to the adventures of an ambitious man which Ranjit Singh proved to be. Circumstances favoured him, and his ambitions inspired him; Ranjit rose, fought and won, and after destroying all the small powers, raised his standard of monarchy all over the Punjab.

Space forbids from entering into the details of Ranjit Singh's career of annexations and conquests. Only a very brief account may therefore be given.<sup>2</sup> Immediately after Ranjit Singh assumed power, Zaman Shah led his fourth invasion into the Punjab and occupied Lahore. But fortunately for Ranjit Singh, in the midst of Zaman Shah's victories in the Punjab, the latter was called back to Kabul due to the sudden rebellion of his half brother Mahmud. He left the Punjab, leaving behind him a confusion and uncertainty of which Ranjit Singh tried to take full advantage. With the help of his mother-in-law Sada Kaur, the chief of the Kanheya *Misl*, Ranjit Singh marched on Lahore and occupied that city, which had been under the occupation of the Bhangi chiefs, on 16 July 1799. Being the political capital of the Punjab, the occupation of Lahore was a great achievement for the young chief, politically as well as psychologically. Some most important of the powers in the Punjab combined to challenge this rising star, and brought their forces at Bhasin, a village few miles to the east of Lahore, in the early part of 1800. Ranjit Singh prepared to meet them. But before the battle started, dissensions broke out in the ranks of the enemies in the midst of which their leader Gulab Singh Bhangi died of his excessive indulgence in *Bhang*; and they dispersed never to meet again. Here was a glorious beginning for the favoured child of destiny, who thus fired with a renewed courage and ambition, marched in every direction

1. Chhabra, G.S. *History of Punjab*, Vol. II. pp. 18-30.

2. *Ibid*, II, pp. 31-82.

with his naked sword and soon the whole of the Punjab lay prostrate at his feet.

By the year 1805 places like Jammu, Narwal, Mirowal, Akalgarh, Kasur, Kangra, Pindi, Bhatian, Dhanni, Chiniot Daska, Phagwara, Jhang, the bars of Karlan and Kathia, and Amritsar and other such places had either been conquered and annexed, or made tributary. In 1805 Holkar, being pursued by General Lake, entered the Punjab in order to seek Ranjit Singh's help against the British. The Maharaja at that time being busy with his expedition to Multan, had to leave it half done and come back to face the situation at Amritsar. The last meeting to the *Gurmata*<sup>1</sup> was called, which advised him against picking a quarrel with the British. The Maharaja acted on this advice, signed a friendly treaty with the British in 1806, dissolved the *Gurmata*, assuming its powers himself, and after a brief lull busied himself again in his policy of annexations and conquests.

Between 1806 and 1809 Kasur was finally occupied; and Pathankot, Jasrota, Chamba, Basoli, Sialkot, Gujarat, Sheikhpura, Kangra, etc. were all annexed or made tributary. The Gurkha power was expelled from the Punjab for ever. And Ranjit Singh led his expedition towards the east of the river Sutlej in 1806, 1807 and 1808 with the purpose of uniting all the Sikh states on the south-east as also those on the north-west of the Sutlej under his standard. But here his ambitions were foiled by the British who, by the treaty of Amritsar signed in 1809, forced the Maharaja to limit his activities only to the trans-Sutlej territories, those on the cis-Sutlej side falling under the British protection. The treaty of Amritsar was the first great diplomatic defeat at the hands of the British which numbed the Maharaja's ambition of uniting the entire Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh under his banner. Still, however, it proved useful in one respect that friendly relations with the British having been established, he could consolidate his territories on the north-west of the Sutlej unhindered. In fact the best of his conquests like those of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar were made only after 1809.<sup>2</sup>

After all these conquests and annexations when Ranjit Singh died in 1839, he bequeathed to his children a kingdom as large as 1,40,000 square miles; extending on the north, on one side upto Ladakh, and on the other upto the Sulaiman Mountains. On the south-east it extended upto the Sutlej and on the south-west upto, but not including, Shikarpur. Thus did Ranjit Singh create, out of the ruins of the Mughal Empire and the chaos that was created by the Afghan invasions, "a power in Punjab, which, in point of military organisation and efficiency, proved decidedly superior to that of the

1. National assembly of all Sikhs which representatives of *Misls* and others attended.

2. Chopra, G.L. *Punjab as a Sovereign State*, p. 238:

Mohammedans in the North."

### THE ANGLO-SIKH RELATIONS

A short account may here be given of the Anglo-Sikh relations under Ranjit Singh.<sup>1</sup> The first regular contact between Ranjit Singh and the British seems to have been made in 1800. After capturing a part of the northern and southern India, more particularly after the Anglo-Oudh treaty of friendship, the British turned their attention towards the Punjab. Moreover under Lord Wellesley a definite development took place which forced the British to look towards this direction. The occasion was when India was threatened by an invasion of Zaman Shah, the Afghan ruler who had been invited by Tipu Sultan, a bitter enemy of the British. As a precautionary measure, the British sent Munshi Yusuf Ali to the court of Ranjit Singh with rich presents to win the Maharaja over to the British side. Soon, however, we learn that the danger of Zaman Shah's invasion receded and Yusuf Ali was recalled.

The second contact was made in 1805 when the Maratha Chief Holkar being pursued by General Lake entered the Punjab for help from Ranjit Singh. General Lake wrote to Ranjit Singh telling him that any help to Holkar would be considered by the British as a serious challenge to their power; the Maharaja called a meeting of the important Sikhs of the Punjab who advised him against any clash with the British, and therefore following the course of friendship he signed his first regular agreement with the British on 1 January 1806 whereby he undertook not to help Holkar, and to retain an attitude of friendship towards the British.

The third contact was made in 1808-9. Ranjit Singh led his expeditions on the cis-Sutlej states in 1806 and 1807 with the intention of bringing them under his control. A deputation of these states met Seton, the British Resident at Delhi, requesting British protection against the Maharaja. The British had already for some time been thinking of doing so, but they could take no step towards this direction because of their fear lest Ranjit should be pushed into the camp of Napoleon who was threatening to march on India. In 1807 even Napoleon signed his treaty with the Tzar of Russia, the danger of his march towards India became more serious; and therefore in 1808 Metcalfe was sent to the Court of the Maharaja to woo him over to the British side. Ranjit Singh taking this opportunity asked the British to help him in the conquest of the cis-Sutlej States, and in the meanwhile led his third expedition against them bringing about an upheaval in the cis-Sutlej territories. Needless to say, the British disliked the Maharaja's behaviour; and luckily for them when in the

1. Chhabra, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 45, 83.

meanwhile Napoleon got himself engaged elsewhere, the danger of his invasion of India receded. The British then imposed upon Ranjit Singh the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809 whereby the river Sutlej was declared as the boundary line beyond which on the south-east the Maharaja would develop no interest except in such of the territories as were already in his possession.

Thus limited on the south-east, the Maharaja consolidated his territories on the north, north-west and in the central Punjab. His ambitions towards Sind in the south-west, as we have given a full story of them in our chapter on Lord Ellenborough, were likewise checked when the British signed their commercial treaty with the Amirs of that country in 1832 which ultimately led to the annexation of Sind by them. Nor was the Maharaja permitted to exploit Shah Shuja, the ex-ruler of Afghanistan, to develop his hold over that country, as will be discussed in the following pages. In fact after the first diplomatic defeat of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the Treaty of Amritsar, the Maharaja grew only weaker in his relations with the British as the time passed. Some of his most reasonable claims on some cis-Sutlej territories under that treaty, such as Wadni and Ferozepur, were rejected; his ambitions on Sind were administered a bitter blow, and his interest in Afghanistan having been checked, the Maharaja decisively formed his opinion, as Jacquemont wrote in 1829, regarding his utter inability to contend with the British arms. He once actually remarked that the British colour on the map being red, the time would come when the whole map of India would turn red. And when he died in 1839 he was sure in his heart that the days of his kingdom were numbered.

### RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN

When Ranjit Singh assumed the direct control of his *Misl*, there were several pockets in the Punjab which after the conquest of this land by the Afghan invaders had been placed under feudatories who though now no more paying any tribute, still accepted a nominal suzerainty of the rulers of Afghanistan. More important of these territories were Kashmir, Multan, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, etc. And naturally enough if the Maharaja desired to consolidate the whole of the Punjab under his standard, these small powers had to be fought out. Ranjit Singh annexed Kasur in 1807 and conquered Multan in 1818, and slowly absorbed all the rest of such territories within his control. But none of these conquests brought him into a direct contact with the rulers of Afghanistan.

*Conquest of Kashmir.* It was only his effort to enter into a bigger game, i.e., that of the conquest of Kashmir and Peshawar, that brought him into direct contact with the Afghan rulers. After 1809 there was a serious contest for the throne in Afghanistan. In that year hardly had Elphinstone concluded a treaty with Shah Shuja when the latter's half-brother Mahmud Shah captured Kandhar, and

soon after defeating him at Neemla, expelled him from Afghanistan. Shah Shuja made an attempt to regain his throne with the help of Ata Mohammad, the Afghan Governor of Kashmir, but was defeated and made to run to a refuge first in Kashmir, then at Lahore, and finally with the British at Ludhiana.

Mahmud Shah, after establishing his power in Afghanistan, sent his Wazir Fateh Khan to march on Kashmir and punish Ata Mohammad for his audacity. Fateh Khan marched with a strong force in 1812, but before he entered the valley he learnt that Ranjit Singh's forces were also marching at this time in that direction to carry their exploits into Kashmir. Both Ranjit Singh and Fateh Khan agreeing to join hands, met at Rohtas and signed an agreement whereby  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the spoils and the territories of Kashmir were promised to the Sikhs. But as the combined forces marched, reaching a favourable spot Fateh Khan deceived the Sikhs, and leaving them behind by a stratagem, marched ahead alone. No share was given to the Sikhs, either in spoils or in territories, and Fateh Khan conquering the valley placed it under a strong Governor, his brother Azim Khan.

Ranjit Singh, however, was not a raw hand in diplomacy. He contacted a brother of Ata Mohammad, Jehandad Khan, the ruler of Attock which was a great strategical spot with a strong fort on the west of the Indus; and playing the possibility of Fateh Khan's march on him, induced him to vacate the fort peacefully and let the Sikhs occupy it. Jehandad Khan agreed on the condition of a small sum of one lakh rupees which Ranjit Singh paid to clear the arrears of the pays of his soldiers, and thus did the Maharaja secure a big prize. The fort of Attock had a great strategical importance. Lying on the general route through which almost all Central Asian invaders of India had come, it could act not only as a strong guard for the protection of the Punjab, but with this fort being in the hands of Ranjit Singh, he could easily expand his territories right upto the Khyber Pass.

When Fateh Khan learnt of it, he was shocked and immediately despatched a strong force under his younger brother Dost Muhammad to meet the Sikh challenge. Thus the first Sikh-Afghan battle in the time of Ranjit Singh was fought at Chuch in which the Sikh victory was so complete that they marched further and plundered the Afghan camp at Hazro. Dost Mahammad gave a real display of his courage and bravery, but his Afghan followers lost their heart and Fateh Khan had to go back to Afghanistan disheartened.

This being the first clash between Ranjit Singh and Afghanistan the former's victory gave him a great encouragement in his expansionist

1. Opinions on the terms of this agreement, however, differ; See Chhabra, *History of Punjab*, II, p. 61.

designs in the north-west. But the yet greater importance of the Sikh victory lay in the fact that had Fateh Khan been victorious, with a consolidated power in Afghanistan and Kashmir, and "flushed with victory over the Sikhs," as Dr N.K. Sinha writes, "he would certainly have attempted to win back the whole heritage of Ahmad Shah Abdali in India."<sup>1</sup>

Ranjit Singh sent his second expedition to Kashmir in 1814. But Azim Khan by this time having fully consolidated his position in that valley, a victory against him was not an easy job. It was only later on when Fateh Khan in Afghanistan was murdered and Azim Khan had to go to take his place leaving behind Jabbar Khan, a weak man, to govern Kashmir, that Ranjit Singh sent in 1819 his third expedition under Misr Dewan Chand, which secured an almost bloodless victory and occupied Kashmir.<sup>2</sup>

*Conquest of Peshawar* The Sikh conquest of Peshawar from the Afghans was more important in the sense that after clearing Afghans from the Punjab, this was now an attempt to occupy a part of the Afghan kingdom itself. The first Sikh expedition to Peshawar was led under the same circumstances as invited the final Sikh occupation of Kashmir. Fateh Khan, the Kabul Wazir, was gathering power, and on this side of the Khyber, all the territories of Peshawar, Naushera, etc., were handed over by him to his brothers, Sardar Yar Muhammad Khan, Sultan Muhammad Khan and Dost Muhammad Khan. The rising power of Fateh Khan was a sore in the eyes of Shah Mahmud, the Kabul ruler, whose son Kamran got the *wazir* murdered, as referred to above. It was this which brought Fateh Khan's brother Azim Khan from Kashmir on the scene. Both Shah Mahmud and Kamran were imprisoned and Azim Khan put Shah Ayub, a cousin of Shah Mahmud, on the throne, himself becoming the *wazir*. Such conditions in Afghanistan encouraged Ranjit Singh to send his first expedition to Peshawar in 1818.

As the Sikh forces marched, Yar Muhammad and Dost Muhammad the joint governors of Kashmir fled from the city and took refuge in the Yusufzai hills. Peshawar was occupied by Ranjit Singh, but very wisely he decided not to rule it directly yet. Ranjit Singh secured a *nazrana* of Rs 25,000 and handed over the city to his old friend of Attock, Jehandad Khan, making him his tributary. Shortly after this, however, Yar Muhammad Khan reconquered the city and expelled Jehandad Khan. Ranjit Singh had to send another expedition almost immediately, but this time Yar Muhammad himself agreeing to be the Sikh tributary, paid a *nazrana* of Rs 50,000 and the Sikh forces were recalled.

1. Sinha N. K. *Ranjit Singh*, p. 52.

2. Chhabra, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 59-65.

All this, however, was hardly palatable to Azim Khan the Kabul *wazir*, who got infuriated on the day of *Dushera* in 1823 when Ranjit Singh realised his annual tribute from his brother Yar Muhammad. He collected a huge force to challenge the Sikh power, and incited the fanatic tribes inhabiting between Attock and Peshawar for a *jihad*. Ranjit Singh also made his preparations on receiving the news and marched a strong force consisting among others of the famous generals such as Hari Singh Nalwa, Dhana Singh Malwai, Attar Singh Sandhanwalia and Dewan Kirpa Ram. He himself followed accompanied by Mir Dewan Chand. The two forces met at Naushera. The Afghans in their well known fanatic courage and daring bravery had for a time an upper hand. Akali Phula Singh was killed and the Sikhs were losing their heart when Ranjit Singh after praying to Guru Gobind Singh spoke violently to the Sikhs and shouted the call of *Sat Sri Akal*. This enthused the Sikhs, and the Pathans feeling as if a reinforcement of the Sikhs had arrived, fled before them. Thus says Burnes : "The Sikhs won a victory because of the words of *Sat Sri Akal*."<sup>1</sup>

The loss of the Sikhs killed in this battle was 2,000, while the Pathans left behind 4,000 dead. Some of the best Sikh officers such as Akali Phula Singh, Gurkha General Balu Bahadur and Garbha Singh lost their lives. But Azim Khan was greatly distressed. "He wept and tore his beard, and inveighed vehemently against the treason of his brethren, who had brought so dire a calamity upon him."<sup>2</sup>

Ranjit Singh re-entered Peshawar with flying colours, and was accorded a huge welcome by the citizens. Yar Khan who had fled before the Afghan forces, returned and was re-appointed the governor of Peshawar on an annual tribute of Rs 1,10,000. Ranjit Singh's victory at Naushera had a great importance, and just as his victory at Chuch decided his supremacy in the east of the Indus, "this campaign established his power between that river and Peshawar."

Within three years of this victory, however, Ranjit Singh had to face yet another challenge at Peshawar. This time, in 1827, an Afghan fanatic Sayad Ahmed who according to M'Gregor, "like others of his stamp, was a dangerous and seditious character,"<sup>3</sup> and was, according to some, a British puppet, declaring himself a *Peghambar* challenged Yar Khan, occupied Peshawar and incited the Afghans for a *jihad* against Ranjit Singh. Hari Singh Nalwa was sent, who defeated the Afghans at Saidu. But shortly after this the Pathans collected once again, murdered Yar Muhammad and re-occupied Peshawar. For a time at least it looked as if Peshawar had been lost to the Sikhs. But a strong Sikh force appeared again, led

1. Burnes, *Travels*, p. 124.

2. Latif, Sayad Muhammad, *History of the Punjab*, pp. 430-31.

3. M'Gregor, *History of the Sikhs*, I, p. 162.



by General Ventura and Sher Singh, and the city was re-conquered. Still, however, as Dr R.R. Sethi writes, Ranjit Singh "distrusted his ability to maintain his hold over that distant country and its fierce population between whom and the Sikhs there existed proverbial antagonism."<sup>1</sup> He, therefore, now appointed Sultan Muhammad, a brother of Yar Muhammad, as the ruler of Peshawar on the same old conditions.

In 1833-34, as discussed below, helped by Ranjit Singh himself, Shah Shuja the ex-ruler of Afghanistan marched on Afghanistan. As Dost Muhammad, the then ruler of Afghanistan got himself busy to meet this invasion, and as for some time Hari Singh Nalwa had been advocating a forward policy on the North-West Frontiers, Ranjit Singh decided to annex Peshawar and put it under direct Sikh control. Consequently, early in April 1834 a strong Sikh expedition under the nominal command of prince Nau Nihal Singh, but in reality led by Hari Singh Nalwa and French Generals Ventura and Court, appeared and took a position at Chamkani. The Barakzai chiefs had already prepared themselves for the situation by sending away their families, and now awaited further developments. The excuse forwarded was the delay in the payment of tribute and, strangely enough, due to the presence of Nau Nihal Singh in the area for the first time as the head of the expedition, it was demanded that the tribute be enhanced. The demand was immediately complied with. But soon came another strange message that since Nau Nihal Singh wanted to visit the city, Sultan Muhammad should vacate it for some time. Sultan Muhammad did so and fled to his village Sheikhan on the Bara river. The Sikhs occupied Peshawar on 6 May 1834, which was now formally annexed to Ranjit Singh's kingdom, and Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed its first Governor.

When the news reached Dost Muhammad, he was busy at the time in his battle with Shah Shuja. The loss of Peshawar stung him and he flung his troops against his enemy and routed them in the battlefield, making Shah Shuja flee with his mercenary soldiers. In the first flush of his victory Dost Muhammad wrote to Ranjit Singh suggesting that "if by way of favour, benevolence and generosity you will surrender (Peshawar) to us again, then we will send to the court of the ruler of the world (Ranjit Singh) the tribute of Sultan Khan." And added that failing this, Ranjit Singh should make himself ready for war. The reply of Ranjit Singh, of course, was a curt refusal, and the Afghans responded with the declaration of war on 18 September 1834 to which the Maharaja sent an equally defiant rejoinder.

But a victory against the Sikhs was not easy without some very special preparations. The Afghan ruler therefore decided to give a

1. Sethi, R.R., *The Mighty and Shrewd Maharaja*, p. 168.



religious character to the war. This, however, could be possible only if he could strike coins in his name, and the *Khutba* was also read to the same effect which again was possible only if Dost Muhammad assumed the title of a king, which could be maintained only by certain special means and which was bound to arouse an active opposition of some of his brothers. After certain considerations however Dost Muhammad did ultimately decide to do all this; and on 4 December 1834, Mir Vaiz, the chief *mulla* of Kabul, proclaimed him as the *Amir-ul Momin*, or the "leader of the faithful." He assumed the title of *Ghazi* the next day and prepared now for a *jihad*. But his resources yet being limited, he had to resort to extortions so that within a short time, the country was made to look "an appalling picture of extortion and torture." This again, however, could not suffice and Dost Muhammad sent his appeals for help to several chiefs among whom were those of Kandhar, Muhammad Murad Beg of Kunduz and the Amirs of Sind. The last named forwarded very strong conditions for help, and only Mir Alam Khan of Bajor and Fateh Khan Yusufzai of Panjshir promised to send some soldiers. The British were also appealed to, in which Dost Muhammad tried to exploit their apprehensions of Russia in Central Asia. Wade, the British Agent at Ludhiana, commented favourably to the Governor-General, but got a refusal with the instructions that friendly correspondence with the Afghan ruler should be continued, but that he should be promised no help.

In the meanwhile Ranjit Singh set preparations in motion and 25,000 Sikh soldiers marched in the middle of April 1835. The two forces stood arrayed on their respective borders, but neither could take the initiative. The Maharaja delayed so as to hatch a diplomatic trick, while Dost Muhammad still awaited a definite reply from the British. Ranjit Singh did ultimately succeed in his diplomatic game, "a sphere in which", as Wade wrote, "he was always at his best." The Maharaja deputed Fakir Aziz-ud-din with Harlan, an American adventurer in his service, to negotiate a settlement with Dost, but actually to bribe the nobles of his court. Dost Muhammad was taken in. His brother Sultan Muhammad was seduced, who also saved the Sikh agents from Dost's attempt to arrest them. In the meanwhile Gulab Singh and Avitabile having been despatched towards Kohat, and Ventura having joined the Maharaja at Attock; some detachments were pushed forward from the remaining sides to bring Dost within the range of the Sikh artillery. Dost Muhammad was thus faced with the alternative either immediately to fight or flee from the battlefield. He preferred the second course on the night of 11 May 1835, and thus, "the political intrigues of the Sikh ruler causing treachery in the domestic circles of the Amir resulted in the breaking up overnight of a vast concourse of the Afghans, which was being viewed by the Sikh rank and file with so much dismay."<sup>1</sup>

1. Sethi, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

Sultan Muhammad and his brothers Pir Muhammad and Syed Muhammad having relinquished their claims on Peshawar, the districts of Hashtnagar, Kohat and Nakko were granted to them in return for tributes, and in return for their undertaking to watch for the Sikhs the future plans of Dost Muhammad.

It was quite some time before Dost Muhammad recovered from discomfiture. And in the meanwhile by the middle of 1836 the Sikhs completed a fort at Shabkadar, which gave them the command of one of the most practicable routes across the mountain ranges for the transport of artillery from Peshawar to Jallalabad. The construction of yet another fort was soon undertaken at Jamrood, at the very mouth of the Khyber pass.

The Sikhs had to fight yet another battle with the Afghans before their occupation of Peshawar was finally confirmed. Early in 1837 the marriage of Prince Nau Nihal Singh fell due. Hari Singh Nalwa sent his forces for the occasion. A person named Fast who had for some time been in the service of the British in India, and was a friend of Muhammad Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Muhammad, happened just then to pass by Jamrood on his way to meet Akbar. He had seen the unprotected condition of the fort at Jamrood and suggested that Akbar should take a chance. The latter took the suggestion and picked a quarrel with the Sikhs about taking water from a nearby stream. The quarrel developed into the historic battle of 30 April 1837 in which the Afghans were ultimately defeated.

The Sikh losses, however, were in no way inconsiderable. The best of the Sikh Generals, Hari Singh Nalwa, having sent an SOS to the Maharaja, laid down his life. The message however was not forwarded by the intriguing hands of the Dogra chiefs at Ranjit Singh's Court, thereby avoiding the possibility of a Sikh re-inforcement in time. Thus, though this was a great victory for the Maharaja who henceforward kept Peshawar in his hands undisturbed, the loss of the one-eyed monarch was great. When Ranjit Singh learnt of the death of Hari Singh Nalwa, he felt very sad.

### SHAH SHUJA AND RANJIT SINGH

In the meanwhile there was yet another aspect of Ranjit Singh's relations with Afghanistan, in which, however, he was ultimately defeated by the superior British diplomacy. This related to Shah Shuja, an ex-ruler of Afghanistan whom Ranjit Singh decided to support for re-instatement to the Afghan throne.

Shah Shuja, as we have discussed above, had been expelled from Afghanistan in 1809 when his half-brother Mahmud Shah occupied the Afghan throne. After certain troubles Shah Shuja took refuge and was then interned at Kashmir, while his wife travelled to Lahore

where she was given refuge by the Maharaja who bestowed on her a good monthly pension. Later on, this lady made entreaties to the Maharaja to secure the release of her husband, promising that the Lahore monarch would get the celebrated jewel *Kohinur* in return. This was one of the reasons why the Maharaja had led his first expedition to Kashmir in 1812, in which, though Ranjit Singh was deceived at the hands of Fateh Khan, yet he was able to secure the person of Shah Shuja. The royal Afghan family was now called upon to hand over the jewel to the Maharaja, in which they hesitated, saying that they did not possess it actually. But the Maharaja was not to be put off, and Shah Shuja had to part with the 'Mountain of Light', which is the literal meaning of *Kohinur*.

Having thus been dispossessed of the diamond, and after some more misadventures and misfortunes, Shah Shuja escaped to the British territories where the British Government assigned a provision of Rs 50,000 per annum for his maintenance, an amount sufficient to meet his requirements of food and clothes, and besides to indulge in the dreams of recovering his throne. This dream he actually tried to realise with the help of Azim Khan of Kashmir in 1818, but failed.

Ranjit Singh had occupied Peshawar in 1818, but instead of annexing it to his direct control, due to certain fears of the Afghans he had decided to retain it as only a tributary state. There were constant efforts on the part of the Afghan rulers to recover this territory, and these efforts did not slacken even after 1823 when Azim Khan got a crushing defeat at the hands of the Sikhs at Naushera. It was under these circumstances that in 1826 the Maharaja decided to support Shah Shuja for his re-instatement on the Afghan throne with the hope that thereby all the Sikh problems beyond the Indus, including the problem of the turbulent tribes of Yusufzais who were a constant source of menace to them, would be solved.

An offer was duly made, which however Shah Shuja was not ready at the time to accept. For the exiled Afghan monarch had not yet developed his lost confidence in the Maharaja. Nor did the British show any inclination to favour the plan, which was necessary lest Shah should lose their protective hand.

Soon however, Shah Shuja repented about having lost the opportunity. And after Syed Ahmed raised a standard of *jehad* at Peshawar and was crushed, Shah Shuja approached Ranjit Singh to see if he was still willing to help. The latter gave a favourable response, but the British warning led to the matter being dropped once again.

A similar effort on the part of Shah Shuja failed in 1830, but by 1832 the circumstances having changed, more favourable

opportunities were created for the ex-ruler. Abbas Mirza the ruler of Persia, helped by Russia, was trying to expand his territories towards Afghanistan. The Afghan rulers being too weak to face such a formidable foe, Shah Shuja was sure that in such a circumstance if he could collect enough power to fight the Afghan enemies, he would be welcome again to the Afghans as their ruler. The Amirs of Sind who had already been under the nominal suzerainty of the Afghans, offered to help Shah Shuja on certain conditions. And a similar offer was made to him by certain Afghan nobles as well. Under such circumstances Shah Shuja approached the Maharaja once again. This time instead of entertaining negotiations with the ex-ruler, the Maharaja approached the British to find out if they too could participate in the venture. But despite the Russian danger the British returned only an unfavourable reply.

Ranjit Singh, however, did not withdraw as yet. He offered pecuniary aid to Shah Shuja on the condition that after his success he would divide Sind with the Sikhs. But this was an impossible condition which was refused by Shah with the argument that the Amirs were no more a dependency of the Afghans, nor did their offer to help him for the Afghan throne make them so. The negotiations fell through.

Shah Shuja, however, still continued his efforts with the British who ultimately agreed to advance an amount of Rs 16,000 for the purpose. Ranjit Singh was approached once again, who agreed this time to give pecuniary aid on the condition that Shah Shuja would relinquish his claims on all the Afghan territories so far occupied by the Sikhs on the north of the Indus. A treaty to this effect was signed on 12 March 1833, and thus assisted Shah Shuja soon raised an army for invasion.

Shah Shuja proceeded with vigour. His exploits in Sind gave him an encouragement, but when he came face to face with the forces of Dost Muhammad, he lost his nerve and as in the words of Wade, he "yielded his antagonist a victory without suffering a defeat." Shah Shuja fled from the battlefield, and after certain adventures returned to Sind where the Amirs bore his expenses to Ludhiana. The results were an utter surprise to Ranjit Singh who had pinned high hopes on the fruits of Shah Shuja's success.

The destiny favoured Shah Shuja with one more chance, as a result of which he was actually able to occupy the Afghan throne, though for this the British had to pay a heavy price, and Shah Shuja too was murdered shortly after. The opportunity came when by 1836 the situation in Central Asia became more serious for the British. Russia and Persia were trying vigorously to expand towards Afghanistan. Burnes was sent, as we have discussed in our chapter on 'The First Afghan War' under Lord Auckland, to woo Dost

Muhammad; but the latter demanded British help to secure Peshawar from the Sikhs in return for any alliance with them. This was of course refused. But in the midst of his negotiations Burnes was startled when a Russian envoy reached the Afghan court with a letter from Count Stimonich, the Russian ambassador at Teheran, reading as he discovered : "Trust him with your secrets," and "I request you will look upon him as myself. and take his words as if from me."

This precipitated the British action in calling Ranjit Singh as well as Shah Shuja for a Tripartite Treaty to replace Dost Muhammad with Shah Shuja. The Treaty was signed in 1838, the essential terms of which we have already examined in our chapter on the 'First Afghan War.'<sup>1</sup>

The terms were quite acceptable to Ranjit Singh, but later on when it was made clear to him that his claims on Shikarpur would not be admitted, nor would he be allowed to occupy Jallalabad; and yet later when the British also decided to send their own troops to be stationed alongside the Indus for an emergency; Ranjit Singh smelt a rat in the scheme and refused to sign the treaty. When, however, as Cunningham writes,<sup>2</sup> the British threatened to do it alone, there was no option for the Maharaja but to sign.

Thus the Maharaja who had been most anxious to bring Shah Shuja back to the Afghan throne, played a very unwilling part when the time came. Perhaps one of the greatest desires of the Maharaja was to have a man on the Afghan throne who should rule the Afghans only with the goodwill and support of the Sikhs. If this had been secured, the Afghan territories already in the possession of the Sikhs would thus be confirmed, and moreover the Sikhs also could develop their ambitions further beyond their north-west frontiers. But this was not to be. His purpose was defeated by the British; and before Shah Shuja was actually able to occupy the Afghan throne, Ranjit Singh died in 1839, a disgruntled and disheartened man, agonized by the growingly aggressive policy of the British. The story of the British affairs in Afghanistan has already been narrated. Shah Shuja was put on the throne, but was later murdered, and the British themselves had to face nothing but a disaster. And commenting on this, M'Gregor wrote : "Had Ranjit Singh lived to see Shah's success in his ambition, he would have hardly enjoyed it. Had he lived to see final British disaster, he would have possibly exploited it in his own favour."<sup>3</sup>

1. See chapter 4.

2. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 198.

3. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 45.

## THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER POLICY

Before we close this account of the Sikh-Afghan relations, it would be interesting to add a short discussion on Ranjit Singh's North-West Frontier policy. Throughout the history of India the problem of the protection of this frontier and its proper administration had been a severe headache for the Indian rulers. And to this Ranjit Singh was no exception. Some writers feel that the Maharaja had a strong ambition to conquer Afghanistan itself, thus "fulfilling the prophecy of the law-giver in recovering the sandal portals, an exploit which would shed lustre on Ranjit Singh's action" and avenge upon the Afghans for their past invasions and bloodshed in this country. And this may be proved from Ranjit Singh's constant efforts to put his own man on the Afghan throne.<sup>1</sup>

Ranjit Singh himself once told Wade : "The French officers tell me that if I place ten regular battalions, two or three regiments of cavalry, and a few pieces of artillery at their disposal they will engage to conquer Kabul and subdue the whole of Afghanistan to my authority." Nor was Hari Singh Nalwa, one of the best generals of the Maharaja, less anxious in this connection. He, in fact, had been advising a forward policy on this frontier since long. Yet, however, the fact is that the Maharaja himself seems never to have entertained the idea of this conquest in any seriousness, despite the prevailing chaotic conditions in that country for a long time. And for this several considerations weighed with him. The first of these was the local geographical, territorial and the climatic conditions to which neither he himself nor his chiefs and soldiers had been used. The Maharaja had once experienced a disaster in Kashmir, and he should have entertained a new experiment of this type in no light mood. Nor, secondly, did he feel himself strong enough for the purpose which was bound to arouse a strong jealousy of the British in India. Thirdly, Russia too would not tolerate the increasing influence of Ranjit Singh on this side, nor should the Maharaja himself have been sufficiently willing to bring his frontiers closer to that country. And lastly, the factor of the powerful frontier tribes who could never be tamed to remain peaceful in the heart of a large Sikh empire, could also not be overlooked. Without this the Sikh occupation of Afghanistan could only have spelled a disaster.<sup>2</sup>

Ranjit Singh was content with the Afghan territories such as Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Bannu, Kohat, Tonk and Peshawar, which he had already occupied. But here again he preferred rather to rule as a suzerain accepting tributes than to annex them direct to his control. The case of Peshawar makes his attitude clear. The precautions that the Maharaja took here prove beyond doubt his

1. Sinha, N.K, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

2. Sethi, *op. cit.*, p. 229-30.

capabilities of a ingenious statesman. Till as late as 1834 he ruled this territory only through local Muslim governors, and not till he was perfectly satisfied for his capacity to annex as well as to keep it that in that year a strong expedition put the territory under the Maharaja's direct control. But even after annexing, the least changes in the existing system were sought to be made, and the local officers were preferred for direct contact with the people. The local Khans and chiefs continued enjoying their powers regarding taxes, fines and punishments—even capital punishment.

Nor was Ranjit Singh's policy towards the border tribes marked with any thoughtlessness or lack of moderation. His policy towards these tribes has been termed only as 'tip and run', and it was the same policy which the British followed in the north-east frontiers towards the Nagas and later in the north-west towards these tribes themselves. The policy aimed at keeping these tribes in awe by sending occasional and powerful expeditions, but never attempting to bring them under a regular governmental control. Ranjit Singh built several forts in this area which besides helping in defence against Afghanistan and in the collection of tributes, etc., were calculated to keep these tribes in order. These forts, for instance, were built at places like Darma, Nara, Maru and Satana. Forts built at Machin and Sikham were meant to fortify Peshawar. Besides, the forts also existed at Jahangira, Khairbad, Shabkadar and Attock, and they were also built at Haripur, Nawashar and Manshera. And to add to this, powerful movable columns were organised which kept a watch upon the tribes and helped in keeping them in order.

Despite all this, however, no permanent peace could be established in this part of the country. There were repeated clashes with these tribes, and some of the best Sikh generals and officers such as Diwan Ram Dyal, Amar Singh Kalan and Attar Singh laid down their lives while fighting against them. Nor could Peshawar be kept in peace. Whenever a ruler in Afghanistan declared a war against the Sikhs, the religious fervour of these tribes was aroused against them. Syed Ahmed also did so. But such troubles at the hands of these tribes rarely resulted in an ultimate loss of territory for the Maharaja, and the prophecy of Masson, which he made in May 1835, that "Peshawar is the land of Egypt, the tribes of Peshawar the children of Israel and Ranjit Singh Pharaoh and the river Attock would become Red Nile if a Moses were found to overwhelm the Pharaoh in it," remained unfulfilled forever.<sup>1</sup>

1. Masson, *op. cit.*, v.i, p. 45.

# 6

## Ranjit Singh And the Sikh State (1780-1839) *Contd.*

### THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

“Governing is an art,” wrote Sir Lepel Griffin, “which may no doubt be brilliantly practised without special training by some men of exceptional genius,”<sup>1</sup> and Ranjit Singh indeed was a monarch who could be counted as one of such men.

According to some writers, Ranjit Singh was a ruthless autocrat with all the three estates, Legislature, Executive and Judiciary concentrated in him. But this may perhaps seem too violent an estimate of his character. That by his very nature Ranjit Singh was not well disposed towards autocracy, is proved beyond doubt when we study his habits and activities more intimately. Tradition thus says, when once the Maharaja visited the Golden Temple at Amritsar, Akali Phula Singh checked him on the way for having transgressed certain essential Sikh laws and customs. The Maharaja immediately offered his naked back to be flogged as a punishment.

The humility of Ranjit Singh is proverbial. He never appropriated to himself the high sounding titles nor did he run the government in his own name. His government was named as *Sarkar-i-Khalsa*, or the Government of the Khalsa. On his coins there was the inscription of *Nanak Sahai* or *Gobind Sahai*; the word *Sahai* meaning ‘protection of’. His State Seal bore the inscription *Shri Akal Sahai* or ‘God, our help’. Cunningham writes of him: “Whether in walking barefooted to make his obeisance to a collateral representative of his prophets, or in rewarding a soldier distinguished by a long and ample beard, or in restraining the excesses of the fanatical Akalis, or in beating an army and acquiring a province, he always

1. Griffin, Sir Lepel, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 129.



made it appear that everything was done for the sake of the Guru, for the advantage of the Khalsa, and in the name of Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh had a drum named *Ranjit Nagara*, and Ranjit Singh used to say that he was a drum of that great Guru. He, according to Payne, "assumed few of the outward signs of royalty. His dress was invariably of the simplest description, his only ornaments, even on state occasions being a string of pearls about his waist and the Kohinur on his wrist. He never wore a royal head-dress, and he never used a throne."<sup>2</sup> He once remarked to Baron Van Hugel. "My sword is all the distinction I require."<sup>3</sup>

Clearly thus, Ranjit Singh did not have the disposition of an autocrat. But even if he tried to be so, circumstances were not such as to permit it. The elements of the commonwealth of Sikhs which had been so thoroughly diffused into the social fabric of this community by Guru Gobind Singh, and according to which the authority of the *Panj Piyaras*, or the 'Five Beloved Ones' was supposed to be superior even to that of the Guru himself, were too strong among the Sikhs yet to permit of any autocracy. Nor was the Maharaja, despite the efforts of his life-time, able to discipline the freebooters among the Akalis who were the armed guardians of Amritsar, the censors of the Sikh morals. The Punjab chiefs though weakened, still had the powers of which the Maharaja could not dispossess them. The instance of a powerful Dogra family at Lahore before whom the Maharaja himself sometimes felt helpless, cannot be too often quoted.

Nor was the power and freedom-loving spirit of the soldiers and the people of the Punjab themselves to be underestimated. They conquered territories not so that some personal whim of the Maharaja be satisfied, but that the name of the Khalsa and their Guru be glorified. Very often the Maharaja made conquests against his own desires, so that his soldiers be kept busy lest they should fall on him. And for the masses, particularly Sikh, everyone whether young or old, was a soldier. They had seen ages of warfare, and had not yet been disarmed. Their very character was such in the midst of which autocrats could ill-thrive.

\* Yet, when all this is said, it cannot be denied that Ranjit Singh was a very powerful monarch. The only thing to be remembered here is that if he was strong, he served the people and they loved him to be so. Ranjit Singh was their leader, and the famous dictum of Mr Gandhi may here be applied for him: "Here go the people, I must follow them, because I am their leader."

1. Cunningham, *History of the Sikh*, p. 233.
2. Payne, *A Short History of the Punjab*, p. 117.
3. Hugel, *Travels in Punjab and Kashmir*, p. 286.

### The Central Government

In the centre the king was the pivot of all administration and consulted whomsoever he would and did as he liked, though being careful as to what he should like and what he should dislike. He was assisted by five ministers, the Chief Minister of whom was the highest in authority; this office being occupied by persons such as Raja Dhian Singh in whom he had great confidence. Next in importance was the Foreign Minister whose office was held by Faqir Aziz-ud-din, whose advice was taken by the Maharaja even in his private affairs. Then came his Defence Minister who was the same perhaps as the Commander-in-Chief of the Maharaja's forces. Dewan Mohkam Chand, Misr Dewan Chand and Hari Singh Nalwa occupied this office. There was also a Finance Minister, Bhawani Das or Dina Nath. And then the *Sadar-i-Deori* or the Minister of the royal household who was important because he came in a closer contact with the Maharaja and therefore had a better possibility of promotions; even Raja Dhian Singh having been promoted from this office.

There were as many as twelve administrative departments in the centre, the more important among them being : (1) *Daftar-i-Abwab ul-Mal* which was in charge of the accounts of land revenue and other taxes and sources of income; (2) *Daftar-i-Tozihat* which was in charge of the royal household expenses, and which kept record of the royal harem; (3) *Daftar-i-Mawajab* was in charge of the accounts of the salaries of the military personnel and civil servants; (4) while *Daftar-i-Roznamcha Kharch* kept the accounts of the daily expenses of the Maharaja.

### The Local Administration

The state was divided into four provinces; Kashmir or *Janat-i-Nazir*, Multan or *Dar-ul-Aman*, Peshawar and Lahore. Besides these there were the hill principalities which paid their tribute direct to the Maharaja; and there were Sardars and Nawabs who had been dispossessed of their own states, but were granted liberal *jagirs* within which they were permitted autocratic rights.

Every province, known as *Suba*, was further divided into *Parganas*; the *Parganas* were divided into *Taluqs*, and each *Taluq* consisted of *Mauzas* the number of which varied between 50 and 100. The principles on which the divisions were made, were administrative convenience, revenue-facilities and the tribal affinity of the inhabitants.

Officer incharge of every *Suba* was known as *Nazim*, and was always a person who enjoyed a very close confidence of the Maharaja. Next came *Kardar* who was the head of a division of the province, and whose office in fact was more important in being concerned with the day-to-day administration; the *Nazim's* office being

more of an appellate than of original character. The powers and duties of a *Kardar* within his division being wide, he was more truly a reflection in his division of King in the centre. It was the *Kardar* who supervised land revenue settlements and acted as a Revenue Collector. He was an accountant as well as a treasurer, judge as well as a magistrate, and Customs officer as well as an Excise officer. He supervised every branch of administration within his division, and not often did the appeals go above him to the office of the *Nazim*, he generally being the final authority within his part of the province.

Of the abovementioned four provinces, those of Lahore and Multan were better governed; while from Peshawar and Kashmir complaints of inefficiency were often received, and the Maharaja had sometimes to reprimand their officials.

According to another view, supported by Dr Sinha<sup>1</sup>, the country was rather divided directly into districts, and not into provinces. Three types of persons were put in the administrative charge of these districts : firstly, those appointed from the centre and known as *Kardars* secondly, those who were men of local influence and importance such as Dewan Sawan Mal of Multan, who occupied the office on the hereditary basis, paying an annual tribute or revenue, and seldom reporting their internal affairs to the centre; and thirdly, those who were military chiefs holding feudal demesnes, in return for providing a contingent of soldiers when required, their powers within their territories being unlimited.

The most important feature of the local administration was the *panchayat* or a committee of elders which existed in every *mauza* or a village, and which enjoyed wide powers within its jurisdiction. Dr Sinha writes : "so much sanctity was attached to these Panchayats that no party dared tell lies before them."<sup>2</sup> Every village was almost a self-sufficient unit in which land was held by its inhabitants jointly on *Bhaichara* basis.

The administration of the city of Lahore was independent of the general division of the country. It was divided into *Mohallas*, each of which was placed in charge of a locally influential man. *Kotwal* was the chief police officer who enjoyed wide powers for the maintenance of law and order, and was generally a Muslim; the most important being Mian Imam Bakhsh. For deciding the civil cases of the Muslims, a special officer known as *Qazi* was appointed.

### The Financial Administration

The modern principles of economy could hardly be expected to

1. Sinha, N.K., *Ranjit Singh*, p. 139.

2. *Ibid*, p. 140.

have been known in the Punjab of Ranjit Singh. There was no budget system, and the money was secured as it was needed.

*Land Revenue.* Of the total income of the state which amounted to 3 crore rupees, 2 crores came from the Land Revenue, which therefore was an important source of income.

Several experiments were performed in the time of the Maharaja, in the methods of revenue assessment. And these methods also varied to suit a particular type of soil, and particular type of community.

*Batai :* This system which had been inherited by Ranjit Singh from the Mughals, continued to prevail till the year 1823. Under this system, land revenue was assessed on the threshing floor after the harvest had been gathered and the payment was received in kind. This system had a defect : a large force of officials was required to keep a watch over the cultivators from the time of sowing seeds to the time of harvesting, lest any portion of the crop should be misappropriated; and this besides being expensive, was no less cumbersome.

*Kankut System :* Because of its defects, the *Batai* system was replaced in 1824 by the *Kankut* system under which the revenue was assessed at the standing crop; taking its representative field and estimating the yield—of which a portion was claimed in kind. The new system was better in the respect that the assessment being made earlier, the supervision of the affairs of the cultivators, right up to the threshing floor was now no more necessary. Still, the system suffered from defects. No correct estimate of the yield could be made beforehand, nor did the basing of the calculations only on the representative field ensure the equitableness of the assessment. From 1835, therefore, the state began sometimes to follow a new practice of farming out land for 3 to 6 years to the highest bidders.

*Cash Payment :* The system of cash payment took the place of the *Kankut* system towards the end of Ranjit Singh's reign ; and under this cash payments replaced the payments in kind. The state, however, never showed any strictness in its application, as either party could revert to the older system at any time.

*Mixed System :* At certain places sometimes the Mixed System was applied, under which some crops paid in kind; while others such as of sugar-cane, cotton and tobacco which defied any correct estimate of their produce, paid in cash.

The basis on which the estimates of the assessment were drawn, also varied. In certain parts of the Punjab, such as the Attock district, the estimates were drawn on the *bigha* basis, whereby an estimate

on a representative *bigha* (a measurement of land) was applied to the whole of that part of the country. The estimates having been made, the price of the assessment was fixed, which the village money-lender was asked to pay in cash; he being helped by the *Kardar* in turn to collect his dues from the cultivators in kind. In certain parts, assessment was made on the basis of *plough*, where instead of taking a representative, *Bigha*, estimates were drawn on a unit of 15 acres of land which an average team of bullocks could easily cultivate. On the irrigated land on the other hand a lump sum amount was fixed on a unit of land which an average well could irrigate, and this rate was applied all over the irrigated area.

The different district settlement reports tell us that different types prevailed at different places to suit the local conditions of soil. In a major part of the country, however, *Batai* system worked in the early years of Ranjit Singh's reign, to be replaced later on by the *Kankut* and then by cash payments.

Regarding the principles of assessment, Dr G. S. Dhillon says, the Government demand was made on the "basis of the state ownership of land," under which a cultivator was ejected if he failed to pay the rent in time. Regarding the rate of demand, the most fertile land according to Dr Dhillon, Sinha and Chopra, paid as much as 50 per cent of its produce; while the less fertile land paid, according to Lord Lawrence,  $\frac{2}{3}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total produce. If land was held by certain state officials such as *Mukaddams* who assisted in revenue collections, the rate was still lower. Sometimes a whole *talua* would be leased out to a *Kardar* who made a fixed cash payment, and made his own settlement with his cultivators.

The cultivators, on the whole, writes Dr Dhillon, paid "according to their capacity to pay and Adam Smith's famous canon of Taxation, i.e., 'equality of sacrifice,' was effectively applied."<sup>1</sup>

*Collection and Remittance.* The collection of the land revenue was made twice a year, about a month after the harvest by *Mukaddams*, helped by *Chaudhris*. The revenue thus collected was remitted to the *Kardar* who deposited it in the district treasury, from where after defraying the local expenses the balance was remitted to Lahore, in the shape of *hundis* which according to Shahmat Ali were drawn upon the bankers of Amritsar.

*Customs and Excise.* Besides land, Customs and Excise were the other important source of revenue, which brought to Ranjit Singh Rs. 16,00,000 a year. The Punjab Administration Report of 1849 reported that the Sikh kingdom had been dotted over with an

1. *Cent. Vol. of Ranjit Singh*, Amritsar; Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 142; Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

innumerable custom barriers, the custom lines crossing one another irregularly. All articles paid duties irrespective of their origin or destination, nor was a distinction made between articles of luxury and necessity. Even the agricultural produce which had already paid the land revenue, did not escape. And then, these articles did not pay the charges only once. As they passed from one side of the country to the other, at every place where a customs line was crossed, payment was made, so that before reaching their destination they had their original price doubled and even more.

Still, the customs could not have been too oppressive, in which case, as according to Dr Sinha, the merchants could easily have changed their routes, and conveyed "their goods through the territory of a less exacting chief."<sup>1</sup> Nor could the system be judged by any contemporary European standard, or a standard of the modern times. Under the principles of economy as they then were known in India, Ranjit Singh's system served its purpose, which is obvious from the fact that despite all its defects commerce in the country flourished.

*Other Sources of Income.* Yet another source of income was the *Jagirs*, which were granted for meritorious services and for gallantry in the army and which according to Shahmat Ali<sup>2</sup> brought an annual revenue of Rs. 87,54,590, though Prinsep estimated it at Rs. 1,09,28,000. The monopolies also brought their revenue. Of the eight salt mines, four were worked and the monopolies in them brought a revenue of Rs. 8,00,000. The monopolies in the distillation of spirit and in the manufacture of drugs also made their contribution.

The income from the judicial proceeds, known as *Moharana*, according to Prinsep<sup>3</sup>, added another Rs. 5,77,000 a year. While the income from *Abwabs*, which were small cesses levied with land revenue, varied between 5 and 15 per cent of the land revenue.

Then, there were the professional taxes. All the principal artisans such as weavers, blacksmiths, tanners paid one rupee per house a year; the inferior workmen or *Kamins* paid half a rupee, and traders between a rupee and two.<sup>4</sup>

*Jagirs* were granted only for the life-time of a grantee and lapsed to the State after his death. And when there was a serious emergency even the State employees had to make their contributions, as for instance in 1825 when the French generals in the Maharaja's service

1. Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
2. Shahmat Ali, *Sikhs and Afghans*, p. 22.
3. Prinsep, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
4. *Gujranwala District Gazetteers*.

and their regiments were asked to forego their salaries for two months.

**Expenditure.** The state being yet only in its territorial growth, the most important item of its expenditure was military which according to Shahmat Ali<sup>1</sup> claimed Rs. 1,27,96,482 a year. And then after this came the expenditure on the civil administration and other such items.

The taxation system as discussed above, may thus appear crude to the modern observer, but writes Dr G. S. Dhillon, "allowing a due concession for the conditions under which it had to be worked out, there is scarcely any justification for such an impression."<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja's government in fact being a national government, money merely changed hands. If it was taken with one hand, it was returned with the other, so that the wealth of the country remained with the people of the country themselves. It was not exported abroad and therefore the system even if oppressive, was tolerable.

### The Judicial Administration

There existed no written constitution or law under Ranjit Singh. Customs and usages formed the basis of justice, and religion worked behind them to supply the necessary inspiration. Whim of a judge also played its part sometimes, but it lay open to everybody to carry his appeal to the higher authorities, though not in the sense as it is done in the present times. The strange thing was that with the background of centuries of the Sikh-Muslim strife, the Maharaja established a perfectly secular judicial system in which each community got its justice according to its own customs and prejudices, and no interference was made.

The Muslims in the country thus continued getting their justice from the Qazis who ordained marriage ceremonies, decided religious cases of the Muslims, expounded the local law and declared the recorded facts.

Justice was more local than national. And it was essentially a source of income, as no chance of securing money was missed, though effort was made to be as honest in the fact of a case as possible.

The fountain-head of justice was in the King himself, who heard appeals above the highest court of the State and intervened to see that justice in a court was properly dispensed. Next to him in authority was the *Adalat-i-Ala*, or the Central Court, the High Court, which was situated at Lahore, the headquarters of the State, and

1. Shahmat Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
2. *Cent. Vol. of Ranjit Singh*, ASR.



heard appeals above the courts of *Nazims* and *Kardars* before they went to the King himself. Then there were the special *Adalti* courts instituted in the cities of Amritsar and Peshawar which decided cases both civil and criminal within the respective cities.

The highest court in a province was that of the *Nazim*, the authority of which was mainly appellate and which heard the appeals above the court of the *Kardars*. The *Kardar's* court was at the head of every district, and it heard cases civil as well as criminal. Village *panchayats* administered justice in the villages in which they were accorded a special recognition and respect by the State.

Besides, there were the *Jagirdari* courts held by *Jagirdars*, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, which enjoyed autocratic rights within their jurisdiction, both civil and criminal, and ordinarily the subjects of the *Jagirdars* could not bring their appeals to the regular courts of the State.

*Punishments.* The penal code of Ranjit Singh was not very harsh. Capital punishment was unknown except at frontier places like Peshawar, and imprisonment was rarely resorted to. In the most serious cases parts of a criminal's body were chopped off, but there was hardly a punishment which could not be commuted to fine.

In the cases dealt with by the Maharaja himself, the execution of sentences, according to Osborne : "are prompt and simple, and follow quickly on the sentence. One blow of an axe, and then some oil to immerse the stump in, and stop all effusion of blood, is all the machinery he requires for his courts of justice. He is himself accuser, judge, and jury; and five minutes is about the duration of the longest trial at Lahore."<sup>1</sup> In one case whereof Osborne himself was a witness, two persons were brought to the Maharaja's presence, who were said to have pilfered at the gates of his harem; the Maharaja saw them, ordered the nose of the one and the ear of the other to be cut off, and this ended the whole business.

Justice was essentially a source of income, as mentioned above. Rarely was there a punishment which could not be commuted to fine. More interesting however was the fact that the losing as well as the winning parties had to pay. The former paid as a *Jurmana* or fine, while the latter paid *Nazrana* for the favour of the case having been decided in its favour. If a case was prolonged, the victim party had to pay a special amount known as *Taikhana* for the waste of the judge's time. On the recovery of the stolen goods,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of them were given to the judge as *Shukrana*. Sometimes the whole of the village near which an untraced crime had been committed, had to pay the value of the crime.

1. Osborne, *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, p. 67.



Though there were defects in the judicial system of Ranjit Singh, there were also great improvements. Charles Mason, a traveller who passed through the Punjab wrote : "time was that a Sikh and a robber were synonymous terms, now few thefts are heard of and seldom or never those wholesale forays to which the chiefs were so much addicted."<sup>1</sup>

Different defects have been pointed out in Ranjit Singh's administrative system. It is said that his government was based on his personal discretion. Ranjit Singh was an autocrat whose will was the law of the land. There was abuse of his delegated authority, corruption was rife and Ranjit Singh's officials exploited the ignorant and illiterate masses of the country. Ranjit Singh's taxation policy has been criticised by the *Kapurthala District Gazetteer*, according to which he "took whatever he could and whenever he could get it." According to J. M. Douie, the system of assessment was so exacting that "the villagers had to bribe the appraising officers to take less."<sup>2</sup> No effort was made to encourage fine arts in the country, no special emphasis was laid on the development of education, and his court did not possess even a single person of scholarly repute. His personal influence rather than an efficient government was the only hold upon the country which held the people together, and the moment this magnetic personality was removed from their midst, the centrifugal forces had their play and everything scattered away in no time.

It is hardly to be claimed that the administrative machinery of the Maharaja was perfect. Yet, perfection is a quality which only superhumans could possess, and the Maharaja never claimed himself to be anything more than an ordinary being and despite his failings and shortcomings, only a humble servant of the Khalsa. One thing however is necessary, that while drawing an estimate of the Maharaja the circumstances and age he lived in must be given a due consideration. It would be hardly reasonable to judge him by the norms and standards which are applicable only to the present times. And it is reasonable too that the majority of his critics after drawing out the defects of his system, have not ultimately failed in giving him a sympathetic consideration.

Nor could it even be asserted that there were only a few good qualities which deserve our notice. "As a military despotism the government is a mild one and as a federal union hastily patched up into a machinery, it is strong and efficient." "As things stood," Temple commented, "there have been no convulsions, no confusions

1. Masson, *op. cit.* i, p. 423.

2. Douie, *Settlement Manual*.

of rights and properties."<sup>1</sup> And again, as Burnes wrote : "In a territory compactly situated he has applied himself to those improvements which spring only from great minds and here we find despotism without its rigour, a despot without cruelty and a system of government far beyond the native institutions of the east, though far from the civilisation of Europe."<sup>2</sup> The thriving manufactures and trade in the country, and the increased wealth of Lahore and Amritsar as testified even by the *Administration Report of the Punjab* (1849-51), prove beyond doubt the Maharaja's love for the people and their prosperity.

While discussing the merits of his administration one cannot ignore the glimmerings of a nascent Punjabi nationalism which existed in the Sikh state founded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He deserves our praise for the perfect impartiality with which he chose his officers, as pointed out by Dr Narang.<sup>3</sup> He had a very keen eye for merit, and when he selected his officers, it was neither religion nor race, nor was it the birth of a man that counted with him. The humblest citizen had the greatest of opportunity to rise to the highest of positions under him. None of the persons such as Mohkam Chand, Raja Dhian Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa had any claim to a greatness by birth yet they were among the most favoured servants of the State, and that was so because they possessed merit.

It is an utterly wrong interpretation of the essentials of the Sikh faith to say, as Sir Lepel Griffin does, that "the main idea of Sikhism was the destruction of Islam and it was unlawful to salute Mahomedans, to associate with them or to make peace with them on any terms."<sup>4</sup> It was a policy which was followed neither by Guru Gobind Singh nor by Banda Bahadur, the most determined amongst the Sikh fighters against the Muslim tyranny. And much less was it believed in by Ranjit Singh under whom the Sikhs secured all the political powers in their hands and could do against the Muslims what the latter had done against them in their own days of glory. In his administration and in his selection of officers the Maharaja in fact followed a policy of perfect impartiality and employed only a discerning eye for merit. The *Jats* were better as fighters than as administrators, and though the Maharaja himself was a *Jat*, perhaps none of his ministers came from this community. The Sikhs generally being warriors, they predominated in the Maharaja's military forces, while the Hindus who were generally considered to be best as financiers, supplied the Maharaja's best Finance Ministers like Dewan Bhiwani Das and Moti Ram. The Muslims being best in diplomatic and confidential matters on which depended the entire foundation of the State, no hesitation was shown in granting these jobs to them. Faqir Aziz-ud-din for instance was the foreign minister of Ranjit Singh; and even

1. *Jullundur District Settlement Report*.
2. Burnes, *Travels*, i, p. 285.
3. Narang, G.C., *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 179.
4. Griffin, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

the post of the head of police at Lahore, the capital of the State, was occupied by a Muslim, Mian Imam Bux. Mufti Muhammad Shah was the Maharaja's adviser in mortgages, sales and contracts; and Imamuddin held the charge of the fort of Govindgarh at Amritsar.

The Maharaja's policy of toleration was proverbial. *Sayyads* were favoured in assessment. *Ulemas* and other Muslim holy men got state-grants, and whosoever could recite the whole of the Quran from his memory, could receive a fixed reward at any time.

Then the Maharaja did not believe in the Divine Right Theory of kingship. He never appropriated any high sounding titles to himself and attributed every success to the Almighty Lord and the *Khalsa*. If despite all this the Maharaja was a despot, he was so because he carried the faith and confidence of his people with him. The State being yet in the process of formation, the dominance of military was a natural thing, yet instead of being a military despotism as put forward by some writers, if despotism it was, it was a benevolent despotism. We have instances like that of Mohkam Chand who stood before the gates of the fort at Phillore and refused to permit some Englishmen to accompany the Maharaja inside it. Mohkam Chand said, so long as he lived he would not permit this to happen, and offered himself to be beheaded before the Maharaja entered the fort. The Maharaja simply respected his servant's views and returned.

And then, though his taxation system if compared with those of his contemporary Oriental monarchs, was far better; yet if there were some defects its merit lay in the fact that no money was exported abroad. If the rate of taxation was high, the rate of payment was high likewise. Money merely changed hands. What the Maharaja took with one hand, he gave away with the other.

If no perfect legal system of the modern type was established, it was so because it was then not known. Despite all its defects, it suited the age in which it worked, and it was no wonder that he was able to evolve so much where there existed nothing but chaos and confusion.

The Maharaja kept no police to chastise the people, and passed no Arms Acts to dispossess them of arms. People manufactured and kept arms freely, and could use them against the State if they were dissatisfied. Yet rarely is there an instance where some officer or some community showed a rebellious attitude.

There was absolutely no official interference in public life. Except in cases of the realisation of land revenue and taxes there were no technicalities and red-tapism involved in state procedures. Decisions were prompt and authority was delegated to make the administration localised. The *panchayats* flourished, villages were almost self-sufficient units in administration as well as in other fields. And the people were happy.

The Maharaja's liberal policy of granting *jagirs* to the deserving hands is a fact too often quoted by his admirers, and says Sunder Singh Majithia, "even up to the present time the *jagirs* granted to religious institutions irrespective of castes and creeds show the broad-mindedness of the old chief."<sup>1</sup>

Nor can it be properly claimed that the Maharaja paid absolutely no attention towards the development of the arts of peace and spread of education in his country. Hindu *Dharamshalas* and *Pathshalas*, and the Muslim Mosques and *Maktabas* were given liberal endowments, as testified by his contemporaries. According to Lethbridge, the Director of Public Instructions under the British Government, there were proportionately more literates in the Punjab under the Sikh-rule than under the British. Talking of Punjab before the British, Dr Leitner observed that troubled by invasion and civil war it ever preserved and added to educational endowments. The most unscrupulous chief, the avaricious money-lender, and even the freebooter, vied with the small land-owner in making peace with his conscience by founding schools and rewarding the learned.<sup>2</sup> He rather bewailed the fact that the female education which had been so popular under the Sikhs, had languished under the British.<sup>3</sup>

And again, if there was an abuse of the delegated authority, let us not forget that it was then a universal defect which existed because the means of communication had not yet developed to make the central hold over all parts of the country strong. The Maharaja himself left no stone unturned to see efficiency and honesty become widespread in his system. He often moved about among his people incognito and mixed freely with the peasants to know their problems.

At the end, even if there were some defects in his administrative machinery, let us admire him that in the midst of his career of conquests, and at a place where there existed nothing but confusion, he was able to create a consolidated administrative machinery. His great service to the State, writes Gordon, was that he, "left to his successors a united kingdom, a territory larger than the present Italy."<sup>4</sup> And his yet greater service to the people of the Punjab was the degree of secular policy which he had evolved before he died. It is said, after his conquest of Kasur when some local Sikhs represented to him out of their narrow-mindedness against the daily Muslim call, or *Azam*, for prayer in the early morning, the Maharaja replied that it was not against the Sikh religion, and the Sikhs also could get up

1. *Cent. Vol. of Ranjit Singh*, Cawnpore.

2. Leitner, C.W., *History of Indigenous Education in Punjab since Annexation and in 1882* (1882), p. 2.

3. *ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

4. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

hearing this call and recite their *Bani*. "However, if you insist on stopping the *Azan*", he tactfully continued, "some of the leading Sikhs of your town should come forward to take up the duty of awakening the Mahommedans for the daily prayer early in the morning. After all it is not Sikh-like to obstruct the daily prayers of others."<sup>1</sup>

## THE MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

Defining the Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, Ibbetson wrote in the Census Report of 1881 : "A Sikh means a soldier." And in 1911 Griffin explained this soldier as : "Hardy, brave, and of intelligence, too slow to understand when he is beaten, obedient to discipline, devotedly attached to his officer,... he is unsurpassed as a soldier in the East."<sup>2</sup>

The history of this great soldier begins with that of Guru Nanak when he was created only a saint. The tragic end of the fifth Guru woke the Sikh from his spiritual meditation. The sixth Guru gave him a military discipline and he was converted into a great saint-soldier. A tradition of self-sacrifice was imbued in him by the ninth Guru, while the baptism of the tenth Guru fired the Sikh with a "burning and consuming passion for political freedom," which now converted him from Sikh into Singh, or a lion. The sacrifice of Guru Gobind Singh's four sons taught him further as to how he should sacrifice his hearth and home for a cause. Banda Bahadur's exploits in the Punjab sharpened his taste for victories against a great power like the Mughals. He learnt the technique of guerrilla warfare from Abdali's attempts to suppress him and thus by the time Ranjit Singh ascended his throne, his tradition as "an invincible warrior, who could sacrifice his all for a cause", was fully established.

Yet, the Sikh had not learnt the discipline of an organised army. The chaos that supervened the death of Banda Bahadur had converted the Sikhs into turbulent and independent individuals "who had been accustomed to carry their swords from one leader to another as they saw the best chance of plunder, and who changed their masters as often as it suited their inclination or convenience."<sup>3</sup> It rested only with Ranjit Singh who proved his military genius by converting this confused mass of invincible warriors with a rich tradition of sacrifice and victories into powerful, disciplined and well-equipped army under efficient leadership.

### Reorganisation under Ranjit Singh

Ranjit Singh's army as reorganised by him consisted of three

1. Prithipal Singh, *The Missionary Quarterly*, April-June 1961.
2. Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 132.
3. *ibid*, p. 132-33.

different sections infantry, cavalry and artillery.

*The Infantry.* In the beginning the Sikhs considered infantry soldiers as inferior to the cavalry man, and he was, says Griffin, in time of war left behind to garrison forts, or to look after the women.<sup>1</sup> But under the influence of European officers Ranjit Singh realised that the infantry was more important than the cavalry, and therefore by good pay and personal attention, and under General Ventura's introduction of strict discipline, long enduring fatigue and other qualities, the infantry soon became the most efficient standing army under Ranjit Singh.

Recruitment to the infantry forces under Ranjit Singh was entirely voluntary, but the service being attractive for the emoluments and adventures that it offered, people joined it willingly. The regular drilling system introduced by the Maharaja after the European manner, however, was not liked by the soldiers initially, and it was contemptuously termed as *Ruqs Looluan*, or 'ballet steps!' Later, however, as it became a regular part of the training system, the soldiers gave in.

*Composition of Infantry.* Organisationally, the infantry consisted of battalions as the administrative units. The battalion consisted of 900 men, and was commanded by a commandant. The Commandant was assisted by an Adjutant and a Major. The battalion was divided into eight companies, and the company was further divided into four sections each of which consisted of 25 men who were commanded by an officer known as a *Havildar* who, in his turn, was assisted by a *Naik*.

Besides the *Havildar* and the *Naik* on the lowest rung of the ladder, the other important officers of the company, in order of seniority, were *Subedar*, *Jamadar*, and *Sarjan* (Sergeant). *Phuriya*, Bugler and a Trumpeter complete the list.

Battalion was a part of a regiment. Men lived in barracks, and each regiment carried a copy of the *Guru Granth Saheb*. The important regimental officers were the commandant, the Adjutant, the Major, the Writer, the Accountant and a *Granthi* with camp followers such as camel drivers, smiths, *baidars*, and cooks.

The system of regular monthly salaries was introduced for the first time by Ranjit Singh. Formerly the Sikh soldiers had always depended upon loot and plunder. But this they got only when they were on active service. Otherwise each soldier was supposed to have his own source of regular income. Under Ranjit Singh, however, the monthly salary of a General was from Rs. 400 to Rs. 460. A

1. Griffin, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

Commandant's pay varied between Rs. 60 and Rs. 150 and that of a sepoy between Rs. 7 and Rs. 8½.

Commands in French: Infantry soldiers marched to the beat of the drum, and commands as introduced by the French officer, Ventura, were in French. Regiments marched swiftly and in a well organised manner. In addition to regular parades, a general parade of the entire army was held annually at the time of Dussehra in Lahore or Amritsar, which was inspected by Ranjit Singh. Their flag was of saffron colour, and their war cry *Sat Sri Akal*. Their endurance was very great, and a "whole regiment would march 30 miles a day for many days together."<sup>1</sup>

Commenting on their courage and aptitude, Burton, a traveller who visited the Punjab in 1831, wrote: "They are thin men with good features; they are capable of bearing the fatigue of long marches for several days in succession, so that it has become a by-word that the Punjabis have iron legs. On their marches, they encamp very regularly, and I saw 30,000 men, the army of Peshawar, moved with as much facility as a single regiment on this side (the British) of the Sutlej. No wheeled carriage is allowed, and their own bazars contain all they require."<sup>2</sup>

Foreign Observers' Comments: Osborne visiting the Punjab in 1839 used similar words of praise. Tall, "rather slight, but very manly looking men, with great length of limb, and broad open chests...They are hardy, far beyond the generality of natives, and seem a merry light-hearted race of people."<sup>3</sup> Captain Wade "could not help remarking the cheerful alacrity with which the Sikhs seemed to endure the fatigue."<sup>4</sup> And Baron Van Hugel was rather "surprised to find his (Ranjit Singh's) troops so proficient in European tactics."<sup>5</sup>

Some defects however, still persisted in this part of the Maharaja's army. "On parade," wrote Burton, "they give utterance to abusive expressions, striking freely any of a rank inferior to their own. The commandant canes the adjutant, who in turn strikes the officers at the heads of *companies*, who again vent their ill-humour on the non-commissioned and privates."<sup>6</sup>

The drum, fife and bugle were in general use in the Sikh infantry regiments, "and in some of the favourite royal corps of Ranjit Singh,

1. Griffin, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

2. Burton, *First and Second Sikh Wars*, p. 11.

3. Osborne, *The Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, pp. 102-104.

4. Chopra, *The Panjab as a Sovereign State*, pp. 301-327.

5. Hugel, *Travels in Kashmir and Punjab*, p. 289.

6. Burton, *The First and Second Sikh Wars*, p. 11.



an attempt was made to introduce a band of music," writes Steinbach, "but a graft of European melody upon Punjabi discord did not produce, as may be imagined, very harmonious result."

The total strength of the Maharaja's infantry in 1811 was 4,061, but in 1845, six years after his death, it was found to be 70,721. It is not clear whether the whole of this increase took place during his lifetime or after.

*The Cavalry.* The Cavalry of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was divided into four classes, which were as follows:

**Regular Cavalry :** This was a body of picked men and horses. Fine in appearance, equipment, and discipline, this body got a regular training after the European manner. It was kept under a French General, Jean Francois Allard, who had been engaged by the Maharaja in 1822. Its strength in 1811 was 1,209. In 1838 it numbered 4,090, but by 1845 it increased to 6,235.

**Ghor Charah :** This constituted another class of Ranjit Singh's cavalry which, unlike the regular cavalry, got no regular training. Nor was it disciplined in any military code. It was organised on the model of the Khalsa army of the *Misls* which believed rather in dash and reckless courage than in any regular procedure of offence or defence. It was paid directly by the State. The payment at first was made in Jagirs to the value of Rs. 300 to Rs. 400 a trooper per year. Later, however, cash payments became regular which varied between Rs. 250 and Rs. 300 per year. A fresh recruit who entered into this service had to make his own arrangement for a horse, but in case he was unable to do so he was provided with necessary equipment by the State against a deduction from his salary in easy instalments.

Griffin while comparing the Maharaja's infantry with his cavalry writes : "In the Maharaja's army the infantry were the pick of the youth of the country; only the handsomest and strongest were selected, while the cavalry were irregular troops, the contingents of his different Sirdars, and not appointed for any consideration of bravery or strength. The horses were small, weak and ill-bred, and the accoutrements were of the roughest and coarsest kind." But this was not perhaps applicable to the *Ghorcharah* cavalry where we learn that the lean and thin horses were not tolerated. Some sort of regular inspection of these horses was made, and sometimes when a horse was found to be lean, a deduction was made from the salary of its owner, as a mode of punishment for his negligence.

1. Steinbach, Lieut. Col., *The Punjab*, p. 103.
2. Griffin, *op.cit.*, p. 135.



"By their desperate courage the Ghorcharahs," wrote Moorcroft, "had earned for themselves a name and for Ranjit Singh a kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

The Ghorcharah cavalry, we learn, was sub-divided into two classes : (i) The *Ghorcharah Khas* which comprised one regiment, its troopers being recruited from among the nobility of the province. (ii) The *Misaldar Sawars* who belonged originally to independent chieftains of the Punjab, on whose overthrow they transferred their services to the Maharaja.

**Jagirdari Cavalry :** These were the troopers maintained by *Jagirdars* who, according to the terms of their respective agreements with the Maharaja, were, when required, bound each to furnish him with a fixed number of efficient and well-equipped troopers. These *jagirdars* presented their troopers for the Maharaja's review in the general parade on every Dusehra.

The Maharaja made some strict rules against corruption in the *Jagirdari* cavalry. Every *jagirdar* was bound to deposit a regular descriptive roll of his contingent in the State Records Office, on the good condition of which depended the renewal of his *Jagir*. Even a man like Hari Singh Nalwa could not escape punishment, should he have been guilty of neglect in this matter, and he was once fined Rs. 2 lakhs for keeping less than the stipulated number of troopers.

**Akalis :** They were some irregular regiments of the Maharaja, "employed on any dangerous, or desperate service."<sup>2</sup> With naked swords, two in the hands and two in belts, with a matchlock at the back and two pairs of quoits round their turbans, they dashed about unafraid. With Akali Phula Singh as their leader, they were two to three thousand in number. They hated Europeans and Pathans, and Ranjit Singh himself, "on more than one occasion narrowly escaped assassination by them."<sup>3</sup> At certain places Griffin does not have very good words regarding them. "The Maharaja," he writes, "was afraid to interfere too closely with these men; for though little better than drunken savages, they were supposed by the Sikhs to possess a semisacred character, and were moreover, useful when desperate deeds were to be done, which the rank and file of the army might have declined...they were identical in character and in the manner of their onslaught with the Ghazis of Afghanistan and the Soudan, whose fierce and terrible attack shakes the nerve of all but the steadiest and most seasoned troops: but the Sikh soldiers of God drew their courage more from drink and maddening drugs, than from the depths of religious enthusiasm which inspires the wild

1. Moorcraft, *Travels*, I, p. 98.

2. Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

3. Steinbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

children of Islam."<sup>1</sup> Steinbach, too, holds similar views about them.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, these European writers seem to have erred in not understanding that these people drew their inspiration from Amritsar, a sacred tank, of which they were supposed to be custodians. A dip into this sacred tank and an Akali was no more a man, but a lion. Though he had a weakness for *bhang*, yet an Akali was a moralist who kept the torch of the Khalsa faith alight as enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh. Whenever he fought, he fought not for a material prize or for some worldly honour, but for a cause which was ever to him more than his own life.

*Fauj-i-Qilajat.* Besides all this the Maharaja had in his service about 10,800 men known as Fauj-i-Qilajat who garrisoned the important forts like those of Multan, Peshawar, Kangra and Attock. The average pay of garrison infantry soldier was Rs. 6 a month, the Jamadar receiving Rs. 12 or more. Every fort was placed under the charge of an officer called a Thanedar. The code of conduct for the men who garrisoned forts was very strict. None of them could be addicted to wine, nor could dancing girls be permitted inside a fort. Furthermore, to curb their immoral or lethargic habits, none of these soldiers could spend more than one-half of his monthly pay. The rest of the money had to be remitted home regularly. Nor could a garrison soldier have dishonest dealings with a shopkeeper, or a clash with any of the neighbouring civil population

*The Artillery.* Ranjit Singh, wrote Osborne in 1839, "is very proud of the efficiency and admirable condition of this artillery, and justly so, for no native power has yet possessed so large and well disciplined a corps."<sup>3</sup>

Again, writes Lieutenant Barr about the Maharaja's gunners : "The orders were given in French...He then tried some of his fuses, which are very good.. All the shot was formed of beaten iron, and cost a rupee each, and the majority of shells were composed of pewter...it is a matter almost of wonder to behold the perfection to which he (General Court) has brought his artillery."

The Maharaja's artillery was divided into four classes : (1) *Top Khana Fili*, or Elephant Batteries; (2) *Top Khana Shutri*, or Camel Swivels, also called *Zamburaks*; (3) *Top Khana Aspi*, or Horse Batteries; (4) *Top Khana Gavi*, or Bullock Batteries.

**Foreign Officers :** The Sikhs before Ranjit Singh, however, were not given very much to the use of artillery. Therefore it was

1. Griffin, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137.
2. Steinbach, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
3. Osborne, *Camp & Court*, p. 144.

difficult for the Maharaja to find leaders for his artillery from among the Punjabis. Consequently, some Europeans such as Generals Court and Gardner were especially invited to officer the artillery. Later, however, men like Lehna Singh rose up and distinguished themselves in the profession. This man, according to Griffin, was an original inventor who cast many a beautiful gun. Mian Qadir Bakhsh was another important man in the line. He was sent by the Maharaja to Ludhiana at State expense, to be trained in gunnery. After this training he wrote a book on the subject

Each of the Maharaja's guns had its own name, such as *Fateh Jung*. Some of them bore Persian inscriptions, and some the words *Sri Akal Sahai*, or 'God be our Help'. Most of the workshops for the casting of the guns were situated in Lahore, the more important of them being within the fort itself.

The total number of guns in the Maharaja's possession, writes Steinbach, was 176; the total number of swivels being 370.<sup>1</sup>

**Manufacture of Weapons :** Lahore, as mentioned earlier, was a very important seat for the manufacture of guns. Spears, swords, matchlocks and pistols were also manufactured. The best armour, including helmets, coats of mail, shields, breast-plates and gauntlets came from Multan, Jammu, Srinagar, and Amritsar. Kashmir supplied the best artisans for the purpose. But later, under the supervision of the officers as Faqir Nur-ud-din, Dr. Honigberger and Lehna Singh Majithia, the number of trained craftsmen among the Punjabis themselves began to increase.

Taking an over-all view, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army could be divided into three parts:

(1) *Fauj-i-Khas*, or special Brigade : This brigade was trained after the European pattern, and it fought generally in the frontier wars. Commanded by General Ventura, this brigade, according to Griffin, consisted of

Regular infantry	3,176
Regular cavalry	1,667
Artillery with 34 guns	855
Total	5,698

"The infantry force," further writes Griffin, "included the *Khas* battalion, strength 820 men; a Gurkha battalion, 707 men; Deva Singh's battalion, 839 men; and the Sham Sota battalion, 810 men.

1. Steinbach, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

"The cavalry force was composed of a grenadier regiment, strength 730 men; a dragoon regiment, 750 men; and a troop of life-guards, 187 men.

"The artillery was the corps known as that of Ilahi Baksh, and was commanded by a Mussalman general of that name, the best officer in the Sikh army."<sup>1</sup>

(2) *Fauj-i-ain* or the Regular Army : Unlike the *Akalis* and *Jagirdari* soldiers, this force was organised by the State and was regular. According to the Khalsa Darbar Records, its number in 1838 was 38,242. It consisted of the following :

Infantry	29,617
Cavalry	4,090
Artillery	4,535

(3) *Fauj-i-Beqwaid*, or Irregular Force : This consisted of *Akalis*, *Jagirdari* troops and others all of whom were irregular, as discussed above.

The total annual expenditure incurred by the Maharaja in the payment of his regular army, according to Shahmat Ali was :

	Rs
Infantry	28,09,200
Cavalry	24,53,656
Horse Artillery	3,24,864
Irregular Sowars	71,08,562
<hr/>	
Total Rs	1,27,96,282

But, continues Shahmat Ali, "a great many deductions are made from the pay of the troops, which reduce the actual expenditure considerably."<sup>2</sup>

*Regimental Dress.* There was no infantry before Ranjit Singh, as mentioned earlier. A common trooper in the service of a *misl* chief wore a turban and a pair of short drawers. The sleeves of his shirt were usually open, and his slippers tight-fitting. Under Ranjit Singh, however, some changes took place, for a brief study of which the reader may consult the author's *History of Punjab*, second volume.

The artillery wore red turbans, black waistbands, with cross belts and scabbards ornamented in brass, long boots and white trousers. The bodyguards of the Maharaja dressed differently, in a cloth of

1. Griffin, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-42.

2. Shahmat Ali, *Sikhs and Afghans*, pp. 23-25.

scarlet or yellow. Yellow satin was generally used in their uniform, and shawls or scarves formed a major feature of it.

*No Racial Bias.* One of the cardinal features of the Maharaja's army administration was the ruler's effort to secure experts to train and command his soldiers, without any racial, religious, or national bias. Besides Indians and Punjabis, the Maharaja's army included Italian, French, American, English, Anglo-Indian, Spanish, Greek and Russian officers. The total number of these European officers in the Maharaja's army, according to the British records, was 20. Carmichael Smyth's list, however, mentions 39 names, whereas Gardner gives the number as 42. At the head of these foreign officers, writes W.L. M'Gregor, "are Generals Ventura and Allard; the former is an Italian by birth, the latter a Frenchman. Both arrived in the Punjab about the same time, and they have always been on the best terms with each other."<sup>1</sup>

The agreement entered into by General Ventura, Allard and other European army officers, according to Grey and Garnett, was to domesticate themselves in the country by marriage, not to eat beef, not to smoke tobacco in public, to permit their beards to grow, "to take care not to offend against Sikh religion, and if required to fight against their own country."<sup>2</sup>

*Europeans Distrusted by People.* Although in the Maharaja's Army, battalions trained in the European fashion existed since 1807, regular introduction of European officers seems to have taken place much later. Allard and Ventura, according to an account, joined in 1822. The presence of these European officers was not liked by the Indian soldiers at the beginning, and even the heir-apparent Prince Kharrak Singh did not look upon them with favour. Yet, as time passed the distrust of the people waned, and the European officers seem to have given a good account of their capabilities in moulding themselves according to their environment.

Towards the closing years of his life, however, Ranjit Singh's notions regarding the value of their services seemed to have changed, and according to M'Gregor, "he either fancies that he can dispense with them altogether, or, what is more probable, he grudges the pay which every gentleman resorting thither expects for his services."<sup>3</sup> The people at large too did not look upon them with a friendly eye. The chaos that supervened Ranjit Singh's death made their lives precarious. Col. Foulkes, an English officer, was murdered, the houses of General Court and Ventura were plundered, and they all fled the country.

1. M'Gregor, *History of the Sikhs*, i. pp 254-62.

2. Grey and Garnett, *European Adventurers of Northern India*, p. 12.

3. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Some writers of the military system of Ranjit Singh have pointed out some serious defects which the Maharaja could not remove. One defect for instance was that a part of the Maharaja's army consisted of aggregate of irregular contingents which were raised and commanded by *Jagirdars*, with the result they were more loyal to the chiefs than to the Maharaja. Nor, despite the Maharaja's strict watch upon them, did these *Jagirdars* keep their soldiers and animals in a proper condition.

The Maharaja also failed in introducing a perfect discipline in his Akali regiments. Though by his diplomacy and wisdom he was able to make a good use of them, after his death this element in his army proved to be a potent cause which hastened the decline of the Sikh power.

The army as a whole was never taught to be subservient to civil authority. The Maharaja being always busy in wars and conquests during his life-time, his military officers and leaders gathered greater importance than the civilians. The supremacy of the civil over the military authority having never been established, after his death the Sikh army to all intents and purposes became a self-governing body. Its affairs began to be conducted by its own *panchayats* representing each company, and the very existence of the civil authority was threatened.

Nor did Ranjit Singh introduce a regular system of payments. "More men were kept at hand, in particular cases, than could be easily paid for and it was his habit to stave off payment by some expedient or other." Then, as a contemporary writer comments: "No pensions were, or are, assigned to the soldiery for long service, nor is there any provision for the widows and the families of those who died, or are killed in the service of the State. Promotions, instead of being the right of the good soldier in order of seniority or the reward of merit in the various grades is frequently effected by bribery. In higher ranks, advancement is obtained by the judicious application of the *donneur* to the palm of the favourites at court, or the military chieftains about the person of the Sovereign."

Only the Europeans got handsome salaries. But they too began to be distrusted towards the end of Ranjit Singh's life, and some of them actually played the part of traitors against his successors. Moreover some Sardars being jealous of them, most of them had to be dismissed after Ranjit Singh's death, thus upsetting the army organisation.

Men of different nationalities and racial affiliation were recruited in the Maharaja's army, who could be kept together only under the influence of his own magnetic personality. No uniform dress was introduced. The cavalry, with the exception of the *Ghorcharas*,

were "very inferior in every respect to the infantry." The Sikh artillery suffered from deficiency in gunners. "The supply system of the Sikhs, though efficient in its working, also left much to be desired...In the matter of strategy, the Sikh leaders, like the Marathas before them, chiefly depended upon their personal experience of war. There was no treatise on this subject and no record of the military experience of the Sikh generals to provide any guidance."<sup>1</sup>

The Westernisation of the army, according to some writers, weakened instead of strengthening it; and that is why this army of the Sikhs, which had fought with great credit against the Imperial Mughals under Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadur, failed to inspire Ranjit Singh for a war against the British.

Despite all the defects pointed out above, however, we will have to judge the merit of Ranjit Singh's army in the battle-field. Thus wrote Sir Charles Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief who fought the first British war against the Sikhs: "It has been said—and the words undoubtedly contain a general truth—that among non-European people the most successful opponents of British army have been those who, like Hyder Ali and Holkar, made no attempt to adopt alien methods of fighting...Nevertheless the struggle with the Sikhs seems to present an exception to the rule...The Sikh soldiery fought with a discipline and stubbornness unequalled in our experience of native warfare; and their doing so was largely due to the methods introduced by Ranjit Singh."<sup>2</sup>

Writing of the terrible carnage of the Sikh troops at Sobraon, thus wrote Sir Charles Gough: "Policy precluded me from publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe, or to record the acts of heroism displayed, not individually but almost collectively by the Sikh Sirdars and army, and I declare, were it not from a deep conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body of men."<sup>3</sup> Thus, there is no doubt, as Sinha writes, before Ranjit Singh died, he had indeed "transformed a rabble of horsemen into the most efficient fighting machine."<sup>4</sup>

And but for the traitorous role played by some Lahore chiefs, the British victory over the Sikhs during the First Sikh War, should not have been an easy job.

1. See further, Dr Fauja Singh's article, *Missionary Quarterly*, Jan-March, 1961.
2. Gough, Charles and Innes, A.D., *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p. 43.
3. *ibid*, pp. 43-44.
4. Sinha, N.K., *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 156-172.

On 27 June 1839<sup>1</sup>, Ranjit Singh died. He had "found the Punjab a waning confederacy, a prey to the Marathas, and ready to submit to English supremacy. He consolidated the numerous petty states into a kingdom, he wrested from Kabul the fairest of its provinces, and he gave the potent English no cause for interference."<sup>2</sup> In the words of Jagmohan Mahajan, "He inherited mutiny and created discipline, found chaos and produced order, and succeeded by the sustained effort of a lifetime in carving out a compact kingdom for himself. But his achievement, though highly remarkable, was personal and consequently ephemeral."<sup>3</sup> "His rule was founded on the feelings of a people, but it involved the joint action of the necessary principles of military order and territorial extension, and when a limit had been set to Sikh dominion, and his own commanding genius was no more, the vital spirit of his race began to consume itself in domestic contentions."<sup>4</sup>

It seems paradoxical and ironical that the founder of an empire should be charged with the responsibility of its downfall. It was his indulgence in frequent and fiery potations which killed him before he should have died. And, also "like most men who have been distinguished in history for administrative vigour and military genius, Ranjit Singh was very susceptible to feminine influence." He married eighteen wives, "nine by the orthodox ceremonial and nine by the simpler rite of throwing the sheet" (*Chadar dalna*). But of his mistresses and concubines the chronicle is too scandalous for more than a passing reference. "When he had secured the legitimate succession in the person of his son Kharak Singh, he cared little for the discreditable intrigues of his harem. Many children were fathered upon him by these ladies, either for political objects<sup>5</sup> or in the hope of obtaining his special favour. To his son, Kharak Singh and to his grandson, Nau Nihal Singh, he sent several ladies of more than doubtful reputation from his own *zenana*; one of these being the beautiful Isar Kaur, who was so cruelly to commit *sati* on the death of Maharaja Kharak Singh."<sup>6</sup>

1. 15th of *Har*, *Sambat* 1896, Suri, Lola Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, III, (translation into English V.S. Suri), (1961), p. 695.
2. Cunningham, *History of the Punjab*, p. 200.
3. Mahajan, Jagmohan, *Circumstances Leading to Annexation of Punjab*, p. 15.
4. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 200.
5. The case of his two sons through Mehtab Kaur, the senior most of his wives, is one instance. See Latif (*History of the Punjab*, p. 370) who even gives the names of the persons from whom the two sons were procured. Sher Singh was purchased from his father Nihala, a Chintz weaver, a native of Mukerian, and Tara Singh from a Mohammedan woman, daughter of Manki, a slave girl of Mehtab Kaur.
6. Griffin, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.



The result of all these activities of the Maharaja was that after the death of Nau Nihal Singh none remained with an undisputed claim to the throne. As it is well known one of the causes of the intrigues against Dalip Singh, the last of the Sikh rulers, was that his legitimacy was doubted.

No training in statecraft or in diplomacy was imparted to his numerous progeny, and even Kharak Singh, to whom there seemed no stigma of illegitimacy remained only a simpleton. Dhian Singh Dogra's<sup>1</sup> jealousy had always kept him away from the court, and Ranjit Singh though cautious was not wise enough to discern the court's intriguing schemes. Hugel visiting the Court of Ranjit Singh remarked, "The eldest son of the Maharaja, Kharak Singh, resides at Lahore, but is always overlooked, as his intellect is too feeble to afford any probability of his ever ruling over the scarcely united empire of the Sikhs."<sup>2</sup> We do not, however, know how much of this feebleness was enforced and how much was natural. Aurangzeb's attitude of suspicion towards his sons robbed them of training in kingcraft, leading finally to the consequences catastrophic to the Mughal empire. Ranjit Singh was not of suspicious character, yet his carelessness in the matter repeated this error.

Although Ranjit Singh was not of autocratic dispositions, he wielded powers which come only in the train of military dictators. Not unoften was his treasury said to be filled up only with the help of his soldiers. Everything was centralised. The Maharaja was the supreme military commander, the supreme executive head and the supreme judge of his State. Rarely was ever an initiative given to an officer in administration or in military ventures. His court, may be with a few honourable exceptions, was a pack of sycophants who, though ambitious, were not yet all-round administrative and diplomatic geniuses. And the natural result was that when the Maharaja died there was misrule everywhere. Soldiers lost their commander and the people their fountain-head of justice and chief administrator.

And though the Maharaja recruited men in his services only on merit, and though it goes to his credit that in an age of religious depravity he cultivated in his court only the sane laws of religious toleration, yet the Sikhs and the Hindus on the one side, and Muslims on the other, were people not only of diverse faiths but also of contradictory traditions, which in that age placed them poles apart. Under the magnetic influence of the Maharaja they could work together, but after his death their harmonious cooperation was difficult.

1. Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, Ranjit Singh's Prime Minister and his relations who had their ambitions to realise after the Maharaja's death.
2. Hugel, Baron Charles, *Travels in Cashmere and the Punjab*, London (1845), p. 287.

And this was not foreseen by Ranjit Singh.

Views differ regarding the Maharaja's financial system. "The Maharaja squeezed the last drop of blood from the peasant's veins," some would say what the Maharaja took away with one hand he gave back with the other. Every peasant family having sent a son or two in the Maharaja's army, money flowed back into the villages in the shape of their savings. Yet the way the Maharaja extorted the hard-earned money from the labour consuming lands was hardly relishing. The peasants tolerated all this because they had seen worse days, but when they learnt the better systems of the English they found it difficult to put up with the old. The changes introduced by the British were more scientific and less exacting.

Nor was the customs system of the Maharaja worth much appreciation.<sup>1</sup> It afforded an encouragement neither to trade nor industry. Those who studied the free flow of trade in the territories held by the British, naturally disliked a system under which scores of customs barriers ran irregularly cutting one another at irregular intervals thus making the goods brought from one end of the country to the other to be subject to customs not only once, twice, or even thrice, but many times, thus making the articles of common use dearer and more difficult to be utilised by the common man. And then the Maharaja's government was national government in which there was no need of winning the support of the privileged and moneyed classes to exploit and control the poor, as the British later on did. Ranjit Singh made every attempt to check the rich people from growing richer. These wealthy and incapable men, thus writes Cunningham, "stood rebuked before the superior genius of Ranjit Singh, and before the mysterious spirit which animated the people arrayed in arms, and they thus fondly hoped that a change would give them all they could desire."<sup>2</sup>

The army administration left much to be desired. Besides the irregular part of his army which was indisciplined and the Akalis who remained too undomesticated, having many a time threatened even the Maharaja's own life, the regular part of his army too was not under the practice of being commanded by the civil officers; with the result that by the time Sher Singh acceded to power in 1841, the whole army became simply a self-governing body. "Its affairs" thus writes Payne, "were conducted by *Panchayats* or councils of 'five', representing each company, and elected by soldiers themselves." The principle of the commonwealth of the Khalsa which had been introduced by Guru Gobind Singh and under which the authority of the 'five' was stronger than even that of the Guru himself, was misused. "To those *Panchayats* the men looked for the redress

1. *Supra*, Civil Administration of Ranjit Singh.

2. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 246; Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 138.

of all their grievances, and to them they made their demands for increased pay, or the dismissal of obnoxious officers. The system originated in the reign of Sher Singh, and so rapidly did the power of the councils grow that they soon acquired the complete control, not only of the army, but of almost every branch of the administration." Civil supremacy in the hands of military personnel is never an authority well-placed. And it is no wonder that "In those days power was a dangerous possession. Every State official knew that to incur the displeasure of the army was equivalent to signing his own death warrant."<sup>1</sup> No sane statesman would dare come forward and openly challenge such a situation.

Troops rose in rebellion at Peshawar, Multan, Kashmir and newly conquered State of Mandi shortly after the Maharaja's death, and when Dhian Singh disbanded some whole regiments; "this only served to increase the general disorder, for the discharged soldiers scattering over the surrounding districts, threw in their lot with the many robber bands, who in the absence of any settled government, roamed unchecked over the countryside, blackmailing the terrified cultivators, driving off their cattle, and pillaging their farmsteads and villages."<sup>2</sup>

A wise conquerer as he was, Ranjit Singh failed to "breathe into the hearts of his people any noble sentiment that would have held them together after his death."<sup>3</sup> No common art was encouraged, no common culture developed. Nor was a common system of education founded. The people combined together only under the dominating authority of Ranjit Singh and when that unifying centre was no more, the centrifugal forces had the best of it and everything scattered away in no time.

Although Ranjit Singh tried to whittle down the possessions of the Sardars like Hari Singh Nalwa by confiscating their *jagirs* after their death to the point even of incurring the blame of being ungrateful to his servants, yet writes G.L. Chopra, "Ranjit failed to follow consistently the policy of reducing the people of the Punjab to a more or less uniform political level; the most glaring example of such a failure was the grant of an extensive and contiguous territory to a single Dogra family."<sup>4</sup> And it was this Dogra family which was one of the potent causes leading to the destruction of the Sikh power. The Dogra Raja Gulab Singh, who later on carved out a separate State for himself in Kashmir, was blamed for having rebelled many times under Ranjit Singh, but he was always protected by his brother Dhian Singh, the Prime Minister of the Punjab, who

1. Payne, *Short History of the Sikhs*, pp. 151-152; Gordon, *The Sikhs*, p. 124.
2. Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145; Gordon, p.124.
3. Sinha, N.K., *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 136-39.
4. Chopra, G.L., *The Punjab as a Sovereign State*, p. 140.

never failed in prevailing upon the Maharaja to take a lenient view of the misdoings of this man of ambitions. Here was a generosity ill placed. Gulab Singh's ambitions were not misplaced, he was rather making experiments which led so unfailingly to the creation of a separate Dogra State. The sincere Sardars of the Maharaja's court were disgusted with this overpatronisation of the Dogras.

Nor had the intriguers among the Dogra Rajputs failed in bringing harm to the State even during the lifetime of the Maharaja. Had Raja Dhian Singh forwarded the letter of Hari Singh Nalwa to the Maharaja in which he had requested his soldiers whom he had sent for Nau Nihal Singh's marriage to be sent back, the life of this ill-fated and hard-pressed, yet so seasoned a General, Nalwa, might have been spared at Peshawar, and he might have been of a better service to the State in the hour of its peril. Had the Dogras not kept Prince Kharak Singh away from the Maharaja's court on one pretext or the other, the prince, the heir-apparent, might have got a better training in kingcraft and saved his own life and his empire. Ranjit Singh knew very well that the Dogras would not permit his children to rule peacefully after his death. "It was the aim of the Jammu brothers to bring the whole of the Punjab under their dominion, Dhian looking forward to the control of the south, and Gulab that of the north."<sup>1</sup> Yet he did nothing to amend the situation.

His Ministers were usually his favourites and adventurers. Selection of the Maharaja's officers was done on the basis of their outward merits, and never on the basis of their convictions. It was hardly astonishing therefore that many of them were later on found to be in correspondence with the British, paying the way for their ultimate supremacy over the Punjab.

Once while seeing the map of India in which all but the Punjab had been shown red which was the colour of the British empire, Ranjit Singh said : "*Sab lal ho jaiga*," meaning that the time would come when whole of this map would be marked red. In other words he knew that the British were bound to annex the Punjab after his death, and there was bound to be a war between the two powers on the score. His mistake was that he postponed this war.

The decline of the Sikh power, according to some writers, began when the Maharaja signed the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809.<sup>2</sup> There was no reasonable excuse, according to these writers, for his demoralised attitude towards the English after 1823. His diplomatic

1. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

2. See volume 1 of this work, the chapter on Lord Minto.

defeats on the question of Ferozepur,<sup>1</sup> on the question of Shikarpur and on that of the navigation of the Indus, were simply the signs of his cowardice.<sup>2</sup> That the Sikh forces were strong enough to fight and defeat the British only if their ruler had dared enter the venture, was conclusively demonstrated in the Kabul disaster of the British in the First Anglo-Afghan war, as Payne seems to agree : "British force had suffered defeat at the hands of a foe over whom the troops of the Khalsa had gained more than one decisive victory."<sup>3</sup> Although the Maharaja was living when the British faced their initial failure in Afghanistan and although he did see his own advantage in their failure, yet he remained unwilling or afraid to withdraw from his engagements. He against his own interests, rather sent his whole army to Peshawar under his grandson Nau Nihal Singh to act in concert with Captain Wade, leaving his Sutlej frontier, then occupied by a British division, quite unprotected. Not only this, but "the whole resources of his country in cattle, grain, etc., were thrown open to the British Government."<sup>4</sup>

That if he had dared he might have won a war against the British may yet further be proved when we learn that the British Governor-General became nervous when in 1838 the Maharaja sent his army to the bank of the Sutlej to check the British soldiers in case they tried to force their way through the Punjab on their march to Afghanistan.

But this boldness of the Maharaja in 1838 proved only an unfortunate event. The Khalsa army was encouraged, and they developed a confidence in their power. But this they did shortly after they lost their leader, the Maharaja himself. It was this event which later on inspired them to cross the Sutlej and it proved to be a suicide.

Bismarck used to say, a political alliance between two powers always means one rider and a horse. In the case of the Anglo-Sikh relations under Ranjit Singh "the British Government was the rider and Ranjit Singh was the horse." "He never grandly dared. He was all hesitancy and indecision."<sup>5</sup>

But let us not go too far in our criticism of the Maharaja lest we should be blamed of a biased attitude towards him. He was a human being after all. And as a human being he was unfortunate too, in the respect that almost all his loyal and brave Generals such

1. Which lay on the left of the river Sutlej and over which he had decisive claims all of which however were brushed aside by the British who occupied this strategic place in 1835, and Auckland converted it into a cantonment in 1838.
2. See chapter 12 on Lord Ellenborough.
3. Payne, *Short History of the Sikhs*, pp. 133-134.
4. *Calcutta Review*, August, 1844, p. 475.
5. Sinha, N.K., *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

as Mohkam Chand, Dewan Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa and Ram Dayal had died before he himself left this mortal world, and none remained behind except the weaklings and traitors to control the army. And again if the Maharaja failed to establish an efficient and lasting administration, let us not forget that the Maharaja was too busy in the conquest and consolidation of territories to afford enough time for other activities. Yet more, the Maharaja's time was only the medieval period of Indian history, and traditions that he inherited were only oriental traditions. To compare his administrative works with those of the modern times or with those of his contemporary European monarchs, would simply be an anachronism and hence an injustice to that hero who was a great conqueror, yet the man who gave a foretaste of secularism to the country he ruled.

## Earl of Ellenborough, 1842-44

### ANNEXATION OF SIND

The Earl of Ellenborough was born in a family which had distinguished itself in Law and Church. His father was Edward Law who later became Lord Ellenborough and was appointed Lord Chief Justice of Common Pleas. His mother was Ann, daughter of Captain George Towry. Born on 8 September 1790, he was named Edward Law till he became Earl of Ellenborough. He was educated at Eton and St. John's college. In 1813 he became M.P., and married Octavia Stewart, sister of Lord Castlereagh and daughter of 1st Marquess of Londonderry. He succeeded his father in 1818. His wife died in 1819 and he married Jane Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Henry Digby five years later. She was a versatile and very beautiful lady who proved unfaithful to him, and was divorced in 1830. Edward was appointed Lord Privy Seal in 1828, and later as the President of the Board of Control in which position he became thoroughly conversant in Indian affairs. Sir Robert Peel appointed him Governor-General of India in 1841, and he came out to blast the Afghan policy of Lord Auckland whom he succeeded. He brought the Afghan War to a close but by his impetuous and theatrical actions made himself a subject of ridicule not only in India, but also in England.<sup>1</sup>

The most important event during his viceroyalty in India, however, was the annexation of Sind. A country situated in the south of the Punjab, on both sides of the Indus, extending to the Arabian sea and surrounded in the east and the west by barren lands; during the Mughal times Sind acknowledged their sway. When Nadir Shah invaded India in 1739, he brought it under his submission, and after his death it remained a tributary state to the Afghans. Towards the close of the 18th century some chieftains of the Talpura tribe coming

1. See Chapter on Lord Auckland.

from Baluchistan occupied it, and parcelled it out among themselves. The more important of these chieftains were those of Khairpur, Mirpur and Hyderabad, the first of these claiming a suzerainty over the rest.

*Past History.* If we have a brief review of the past history of this country, the first contact with it was made by the British as usual through merchants in 1758 when a permission to establish a factory at Thatta was secured. In 1761 more commercial concessions were given to them, but by 1775 the English, having developed a distrust in the minds of the Amirs of Sind due to their obnoxious interference in the Sind politics, were compelled to withdraw from the country.

Another English attempt to establish some commercial interests in Sind failed in 1799. But when in 1807 the political events in Europe took a sharp turn due to Napoleon's signing the Treaty of Tilsit with the Tsar of Russia thereby developing the possibility of the French march on the eastern empire of England, the British sent a mission to Sind, as they did to the Punjab. The mission imposed a treaty on the Amirs in 1809, which was renewed in 1820 whereby an eternal friendship was signed between British India and Sind, and the Amirs bound themselves not to permit any European, particularly of "the tribe of the French", or an American to settle in their country; though each would allow the settlement of the other's subjects if they conducted themselves in an orderly manner. Nothing more of importance happened in the Anglo-Sind relations till 1831.

In the meanwhile Ranjit Singh having conquered Multan in 1818, began to develop his ambitions towards Sind. In 1823 he actually led an expedition in that direction with the pretext of punishing the Balochis who he said, had attacked his troops in Multan, but with the real intention of exploring the possibility of the occupation of Shikarpur.<sup>1</sup> Amirs being alarmed, sent him presents, and Ranjit Singh returned. In 1824 Ranjit Singh asserted that the Afghan possessions in the Punjab having been occupied by him, he supplanted their authority, and therefore the Amirs should pay the tribute to him which of old they used to pay to the Afghans. The response naturally being negative, since the Amirs had long since stopped paying that tribute, Ranjit Singh marched his forces into Sind in 1825, but abandoned the plan of its conquest due to the severe famine that preyed upon that country. In 1826 he marched his forces once again, but Syed Ahmed having raised a standard of revolt in Peshawar, he had to return in haste.<sup>2</sup>

1. See for details, Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh Power in Punjab* pp. 140 ; and Chhabra, G.S., *History of Punjab*, Chapter VIII.
2. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.165; Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 433.



The British could not watch the rising ambitions of Ranjit Singh towards Sind unconcerned. And therefore from the year 1831 Sind entered into a period of intense diplomatic activity in which game Ranjit Singh was ultimately defeated and completely eliminated from that land. The game started with the plan of the navigation of the Indus.

*Navigation of the Indus.* The British had been interested in the navigation of the river Indus from the early years of the 19th century. They had been entertaining the hopes of controlling the Central Asian markets, which was very much possible through the Indus route. "The navigation of Indus" wrote William Moorcroft as early as 1809, "although little known to Europeans, as it had not been attempted by them, is perfectly practicable for boats of considerable burden."<sup>1</sup> There were, however, several other reasons as well which precipitated the British plan to navigate the river. By the treaty of Turkomanchai signed between Russia and Persia in February 1828, as in the words of Kaye, "Persia was delivered hand and foot bound to the court of St. Petersburg."<sup>2</sup> Russia was further aspiring for the exploits not only in Afghanistan, but also in Khorassan and Herat, and according to one view, in India as well. The navigation of the Indus could develop British contacts with all these countries and thus forestall the Russian moves.

Moreover, just this time a mission from the Persian ruler Fateh Ali carrying a proposal for the marriage of his daughter, visited the Amir of Hyderabad, and the British naturally grew apprehensive that if both these countries became friendly, Russia could very easily develop her influence on Sind through Persia. And again, Russia already had commercial influence in Bokhara and the adjoining Khanates, which could be counteracted easily by similar English interests in Sind and Central Asia. Another benefit of the Indus navigation would be the development of new markets for the produce and manufactures of the European and Indian dominions of the British. And again, the British did not fail in realising the growing interests of Ranjit Singh in Sind, through the occupation of which he was aspiring to have an outlet on the Arabian sea, whereby perhaps to establish contacts with the overseas countries. The only check on Ranjit Singh towards this side, wrote Cunningham, was "to open the Indus to the navigation of the world."<sup>3</sup> Besides the secret purpose of the English, as confirmed by Charles Masson, was to encircle the country of the Maharaja.<sup>4</sup> Lord Ellenborough's despatch of October 1842 to the Queen read: "Lord Ellenborough looks forward to the

1. Moorcroft, W., *Travels in Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and Punjab*, II, p. 338.
2. Kaye, *History of War in Afghanistan*, I, pp. 151-56.
3. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
4. Masson, Charles, *Narrative of Various Journeys*, p. 432.

Indus superseding the Ganges as the channel of communication with England, and to bringing European regiments and all military stores by that route to the North-Western Frontier."

But such a move on the part of the English, it was realised, would naturally be resented by Ranjit Singh as also by the Amirs of Sind. A very cautious plan was therefore needed, which was chalked out by the British authorities during 1827-28.

In 1827 Ranjit Singh had sent some presents to Amherst, the then Governor-General of India. The next year when Amherst retired to England, it was planned that presents should be sent in return to the Maharaja on behalf of the British crown. These presents would consist of a team of cart-horses, one stallion and 4 mares, and would be sent through the Indus, and "the authorities both in England and India contemplated that much information of political and geographical nature might be acquired in such a journey."<sup>1</sup> Burnes was put in charge of all these transactions, and it was planned that if the Amirs of Sind objected to his passage through Sind, he would say that there was a possibility of the carriage meant for the Maharaja being worn out if sent by road. Therefore the transition through the river was necessary.

This clearly shows the dishonesty and a treacherous diplomacy in the British game. The mission's "ulterior purpose and its being mission of espionage through Sind came to the surface later during the Afghan war," writes Dr R.R. Sethi.<sup>2</sup> And Metcalfe too wrote that such a trick was 'unworthy of our Government.' Moreover we learn on the authority of Mohan Lal, that about twenty years before similar presents had already been sent to Ranjit Singh by road. The argument of the carriage being worn out, therefore, was entirely fallacious. Sir Alexander Burnes himself wrote about the scheme: "This seems to me highly objectionable. It is a trick, in my opinion, unworthy of our Government, which cannot fail, when detected, as most probably it will be, to excite the jealousy and indignation of powers on whom we play it. It may even lead to war."<sup>3</sup>

Amirs as it was expected, did object to the British move. And finally it was only on the threat of Ranjit Singh's forces, which incidentally were nearby in Dera-Ghazi-Khan, that the Amirs gave their permission. Besides securing the threat of the Maharaja's forces on the pretext of safe transition of the presents meant for him, the English also secured a personal intervention of the Maharaja who, it is said, called the envoy of the Amirs to his presence and reprimanded him for the behaviour. Ranjit Singh did all this because he was

1. Sethi, R.R., *The Mighty and Shrewd Maharaja*, p. 78.

2. *ibid.* p. 82.

3. Quoted by Gilliat, Edward, *Heroes of Modern India*, p. 145.

already out to use any pretext for his designs against Sind. But little did he know that in this case the British were playing a dog's trick on him.

Besides bringing presents, Burnes is said to have made a casual reference to the possibility of opening up the Indus and the Sutlej to navigation. Wade, the British agent at Ludhiana, who was accompanying Burnes on his visit to the Darbar, also brought with him a proposal to arrange an interview with Bentinck, the Governor-General, at Rupar where Ranjit Singh would be received with all pomp and show. The next day the Governor-General would pay a return visit to the Maharaja on the latter's side of the border.<sup>1</sup>

The meeting between the Governor-General and the Maharaja was arranged at Rupar on 26 October 1831. Here Ranjit Singh, according to Latif, invited the Governor-General for a joint action against Sind which could be divided between the two. But the latter refused, telling him that the British were not interested in Sind at all. Thus, while lulling the Maharaja to sleep, writes Abdul Qadir,<sup>2</sup> the Governor-General let him know vaguely that four days before this meeting Pottinger had already been issued the instructions to proceed to Sind and sign with the Amirs a commercial treaty.<sup>3</sup>

When Burnes reported favourably on the suitability of the Indus navigation, the Governor-General decided to launch his project forthwith. Pottinger was sent to the Amirs with a detailed plan for the Indus navigation. He was thoroughly educated as to how he would proceed. He would take guarantee from the Amirs against obstructions to the trade through the river. He would also make the Amirs realise how their people would flourish. And if the Amirs yet objected, Pottinger was to say that the Amirs had no right to violate the international law by depriving all the states on the Indus of trade benefits from the river, only because they happened to occupy a small portion of it.<sup>4</sup>

These instructions were issued to Pottinger only four days before the meeting at Rupar. Proceeding the planned way Pottinger at long last did succeed in making the Amirs sign the treaty on 4 April 1832. The essential feature of the Treaty was that the Amirs would permit the British to carry on their trade through the Indus, but that no permission would be given for the transition of military stores, nor would they permit armed vessels through it. Further it was expressly laid down that no British merchant would be permitted to settle in

1. Ranjit Singh's Centenary Vol., published by Khalsa College, Amritsar

2. *ibid.*

3. Chhabra, *op. cit.*, II, Chapter VIII.

4. Punjab Govt. Records 98/181, Govt. to Pottinger, Oct. 22. 1831.

Sind, and this shows how distrustful the Amirs were of the British designs. A supplement to this Treaty, signed on 22 April transferred the final powers of dividing the levy of duties on foreign goods from Amirs to the British.

All these measures, according to Gordon,<sup>1</sup> naturally aroused a strong suspicion in the mind of the Maharaja, and it is said that when he learnt of these transactions he could not sleep for several nights. The British, however, not only soothed him, he was also prevailed upon, together with the Nawab of Bhawalpur, to open the river Sutlej as well for navigation. And thus the rivers Sutlej and Indus lay open to the British for their commercial and political games.

After opening up these rivers to navigation, the next British proposal, as it originated with Wade, was that the British officers should be stationed at several places on the line of navigation in the Indus. He argued that the Sikhs, Sindhians and Daodpotras were hostile to one another, and if the British officers were not stationed in their midst, their hostilities might hinder a smooth running of the trade. Secondly, by doing so, Ranjit Singh's intention to convert Mithankot into a mart for the produce of his own country would be foiled. Thirdly, the British purpose behind all this being political, he argued that the presence of British officers would facilitate the realisation of it. Fourthly, the line between Mithankot and Shikarpur being at the mercy of the Amirs of Sind, the British would be able to protect it. And lastly, he forwarded that Mithankot being a central place, if a British officer was stationed there he would be able to control and regulate all the trade.

But to put this proposal into effect was not an easy job. The Amirs of Sind already apprehensive of the British designs, would not agree to the proposal that a British officer should be stationed in their country. Pottinger was sent once again to handle them, but they did not budge from their position an inch. When all the appeasements and threats failed, a compromise was at last struck, and it was agreed that instead of a European, some native would be appointed as British officer in Sind. And thus was the Indus line opened up for trade.

Despite all the efforts, however, this trade route could never become popular with merchants even though so much capital had been made out of its importance. Burnes was sent to Kabul to convince the Kabul merchants of its utility, but this mission also failed and it was not long before this route had to be closed.

The reasons for its failure were quite plain. Of all the parties

1. Gordon, *The Sikhs*, p. 31

who signed the agreement, British alone were interested in the project. But their action too was inspired more by political motives than commercial. Ranjit Singh, Bhawal Khan of Bhawalpur and the Amirs of Sind, all showed their suspicion in the project; the Amirs detained and delayed boats passing through their territories and put all sorts of obstacles in the way of the smooth running of the trade, despite repeated threats of the British. Thus the only purpose served by opening up these rivers for navigation was that the Russian and the Sikh designs towards Sind were checked, or as Charles Masson wrote : "The results of the policy concealed under this pretext have been the introduction of troops into the countries on and beyond the river, and of some half a dozen steamers on the stream itself, employed for warlike objects, not those of trade."<sup>1</sup> But then this was the main motive of the British, and in this they succeeded.

*The Political Hold.* Having thus established their commercial relations with Sind, it was now not difficult for the English to develop their political hold. In fact, in the East, English politicians had always supplanted the English merchant, and in this Sind could be no exception. The question of Shikarpur facilitated their move.

Shikarpur, lying west of the Indus, below Mithankot, was a place known far and wide for its being an important commercial centre. Besides, it had a military importance as well, for it lay on the way to the Bolan Pass, and for the protection of this Pass a military centre could best be established here. Ranjit Singh wanted to occupy the city for obvious reasons, which the English, again, would not permit.

Mazaris, a tribe of free-booters inhabiting some territory southwest of Mithankot, at a few miles distance from it, carried their incursions alike in Sind, Bhawalpur and the Lahore territories. But since they occupied the border land between Sind and Punjab, the Amirs, despite their suzerainty, could not control them. The incursions of the Mazaries in the Lahore territories increased by 1836, and Ranjit Singh decided to crush their power once and for all. Besides, taking an excuse for the losses he suffered due to their inroads, the Maharaja demanded Shikarpur from the Amirs. "The British could have no reasonable objection to his occupying it. It lay to the west of the Sutlej-Indus, and according to the treaty of 1809, they had agreed not to interfere with his affairs in trans-Sutlej territories." The Amirs, however, appealed to the British for help and the latter were already waiting for such an opportunity. On 25 November 1836, a treaty was signed between the English and the Amirs. By this treaty, the Amirs were obliged to receive a British agent who would be a medium of communication between the Maharaja and

1. Masson, Charles, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Punjab and Kalat*, p. 432.

the Amirs. The Amirs would also withdraw their *vakil* from Lahore. And in return for this the British agreed to defend the Amir's territories.

By signing this treaty, as it is obvious, the Amirs signed their own death warrants. It was now a clear writing on the wall that it would not be long before their power would be thrown into the dust-bin of history and their country would be annexed. Ranjit Singh fretted and fumed, but was helpless.

*The Annexation.* The British imperialism in India had been known for its aggressiveness. But the policy of aggressiveness was never so nakedly followed as in Sind. The British developed their hold over this country by stages, and after what has been narrated above, the next stage came when the British desired to send their forces into Afghanistan in support of the ex-Afghan-Amir, Shah Shuja, and Ranjit Singh did not permit the British forces to march through his country in 1839. Where might was right, there was no question of forwarding arguments. - The only alternative was that the British forces should be sent through Sind, and not caring for the Treaty of 1832 with the Amirs, they were simply told that "while the present exigency lasts the article of the treaty prohibiting the use of the Indus for the conveyance of military stores must necessarily be suspended."<sup>1</sup> There was no need for waiting for the Amirs' reply, and the British forces marched through Sind.

The British, however, still were not contented. And now was a demand made upon the Amirs for which there was neither any reason nor a moral ground. The Amirs were required to make a payment of their arrears of tribute to Shah Shuja, the ex-ruler of Afghanistan, now seeking refuge under the British. The Amirs argued in vain that they had not paid their tribute for thirty years, and that Shah Shuja himself had exempted them from it. Moreover, the tribute was due only to the ruler of Afghanistan, who at that time was Dost Muhammad and not Shah Shuja. But the British needed money, and no arguments. The Amirs were frankly told that "we have the ready power to crush and annihilate them, and we will not hesitate to call it into action." It is useless to criticise the British too much for such an attitude.

Still not satisfied, Sir John Keane threatened to march upon Sind, and got the Amirs to sign a new treaty on 11 March 1839. Later on, however, it was discovered that the treaty should have been different from what it actually was. And without consulting the Amirs it was arbitrarily revised and presented before them for signature. The Amirs objected, but since the British had the 'ready power' to annihilate them, they gave way. By this treaty, each Amir was placed in his own possession, and their mutual disputes were to be referred to the British for arbitration. Sind was formally placed under the British protection, and the British forces for the

purpose were to be stationed at a convenient place west of the Indus. The Amirs would pay three lakhs of rupees annually to meet their expenses, and this amount would be realised from the three Amirs in proportion to their territories. Lord Auckland himself remarked on this treaty: "The confederacy of the Amirs is virtually dissolved."

During the First Afghan War, Sind was used by the British as a base for their operations. Despite chances for mischief during the British disaster in Afghanistan, the Amirs remained faithful. Still, when the war was over the Amirs were charged of disaffection and hostility. Major James Outram, the British Resident at Hyderabad, was superseded by Sir Charles Napier—a rank annexationist who was put in supreme control of both civil and political affairs in Sind in September 1842. And the consequences of the political powers passing into the hands of a General were natural. Innes remarks: "Sir Charles conducted his operations on the theory that the annexation of Sind would be a very beneficent piece of rascality for which it was his business to find an excuse—a robbery to be plausibly effected."

An opportunity offered itself to Napier. There was a disputed succession of Khairpur, and without considering any merit or right, Napier decided in favour of Ali Murad.<sup>1</sup> But when this process of the game could not bring him a speedy advantage, he declared that the charges of unfaithfulness made against the Amirs during the Afghan war had been substantiated, and therefore they deserved a severe punishment. The punishment would be in the shape of a new treaty, whereby they would cede an important territory in lieu of the tribute of three lakhs of rupees for the maintenance of the subsidiary force; would provide fuel for the English steamers navigating in the Indus; and would give up in favour of the British, the right of coining money. The money henceforward issued in Sind, would bear the "effigy of the sovereign of England". Napier declared in December 1842, that the new treaty must be signed by 20 January 1843, otherwise the unfriendly attitude of the Amirs would be proved.

The terms of the proposed new treaty were too harsh, and required of the Amirs a complete surrender of national rights. Outram called a meeting of the Amirs at Khairpur to persuade them. The Amirs of lower Sind reached in time, while those of the upper Sind were delayed by two days as a result of the machination of Ali Murad. This could not be tolerated by the hot-blooded imperious, General Napier, who took an amazing step and without declaring a war, attacked the famous fortress of Imamgarh between Khairpur and Hyderabad, and razed it to the ground; "as though the rights of the Governor-General of India, to parcel it (Sind) out at his pleasure

1. See for details *Cambridge History of India*, V, pp. 532.



were unquestioned."

Still, however, Outram was able to persuade the Amirs to sign the treaty so that the worst could be avoided. The Amirs warned Napier to vacate Hyderabad, lest the British should be harmed by their countrymen who could not be controlled under the circumstance. Yet the warning was not heeded, and in three days the Baluchis, excited by the high-handedness of Napier attacked Outram's residence, who after a gallant defence was able to escape to take refuge on a steamer. Now a regular war began.

On 17 February 1843 Napier gave a brilliant battle, an able General as he was, to 30,000 men of the Amirs at Miani and was able to defeat them completely and destroy 5,000 of their number by a mere force of less than 3,000 men under his command.<sup>1</sup> Hyderabad was occupied, on 27 March 1843 Mirpur fell, and Napier wrote to Ellenborough : "Paccavi, I have Sind". Sind was annexed, and the Amirs were exiled. Napier got £ 70,000 out of the plunder of Hyderabad, while Outram was offered £ 3,000, which he, however, refused to keep and distributed in charity, saying "I am sick of policy."

Thus did it happen. P.E. Roberts writes : "An able and ambitious General, eager for distinction, and impatiently believing that the undoubted benefits of British rule justified almost any means of extending it, brought the rough-hewn ready-made solution of the soldiers to bear on an intricate administrative problem."<sup>2</sup>

The Directors themselves disapproved of Napier's Sind policy and Lord Ellenborough's silent annexation of it, though they had no courage to restore Sind to the Amirs. It is useless to repeat too often that the Amirs were innocent, that they had given absolutely no provocation to the British, and that they remained perfectly loyal to their engagements with the British during and after the Afghan war. "If the Afghan episode is the most disastrous in our Indian annals, that of Sind is morally even less excusable." Napier himself wrote in his diary : "we have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be." And commenting on this, writes Dr Marshman, in Napier's action, "the rascality is more apparent than the advantage."<sup>3</sup>

Sind is the only British acquisition in India, writes Ramsay Muir, "of which it may fairly be said that it was not necessitated by circumstances and that it was, therefore, an act of aggression."<sup>4</sup> The

1. Napier, William, *The Conquest of Sind*.
2. Roberts, *History of British India*, p. 329.
3. Marshman, *History of India*, p. 333.
4. Ramsay Muir, *Making of British India*, p. 243.



conquest of Sind, at best, was only the aftermath of the Afghan disaster. "The real cause of this chastisement of the Amirs consisted in the chastisement the British had received from the Afghans."

W.A.J. Archbold agrees : "In the light of subsequent history it may even be argued that Outram's policy of trust in the Amirs would have proved less wise than Napier's policy of vigilant coercion." "And yet," Archbold comments, "the whole transaction has been thought to bear a colour of injustice which may rightly be ascribed to some of its parts, and the plea of the happiness of the people, who gained enormously by the change, has not been held sufficient to justify what happened."<sup>1</sup>

Truly, one may conclude with Dr Ishwari Prasad, that the Amirs were unfortunate "victims of British imperialism; they lost their all and found no tribunal to which they could address an appeal."<sup>2</sup>

### GWALIOR UNDER BRITISH PROTECTION

Another event of importance in the time of Ellenborough occurred in the British relations with Gwalior. Here at least, Ellenborough's attitude was based more on reason than on aggression. Sindhia had been left as the most powerful Maratha chief after the third Maratha war ending in 1818. In 1843 his throne was occupied by a minor, in whose time the state's administration began to rot. The Regent of the ruler who was responsible for this, was dismissed by the young widow of the late ruler with the approval of Ellenborough. This, however, proved to be a signal for confusion which threatened a civil war in the country. The Sindhia army consisted of 40,000 men, and the greatest apprehension in the mind of Ellenborough was that the Punjab being in the midst of the most serious trouble, this formidable army might join hands with the Sikhs and thus create a serious situation. Appealing to Lord Wellesley's treaty signed with Sindhia in 1804, Ellenborough marched his forces on the Chambal, though still assuming that the matter could be settled by peaceful means. The army of Gwalior, however, was prepared to try their hands with the British, and prevented their rulers from making a peaceful settlement. Two battles were fought on 29 December 1843. One at Maharajpur where the Marathas lost 3,000 killed and wounded, while the British lost 297. British secured a victory, but at a heavy cost. The second battle was fought the same day at Paniar where General Grey won a comparatively cheap victory.

As a result of this war, though no territory of Gwalior was annexed, the state was brought under definite British protection. The ruler being a minor, for the next decade the state administration was

1. *Cambridge History of India*, V, pp. 538-39.
2. Prasad and Subedar, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

virtually run by the British Resident. The state army was reduced to 9,000 soldiers, and a British contingent of 10,000 was raised for the state.

Hardly had Ellenborough returned with victory to Calcutta, expecting appreciation from Home, when he received the orders for his recall. The Directors had not liked his policy of naked aggression in Sind, and the tone of his despatches had offended them. This ended Ellenborough's short career in India.

Returning to England, he became G.C.B. and was created an Earl. In 1846 Sir Robert Peel appointed him First Lord of Admiralty in his Cabinet, and in 1850 he was again appointed President of the Board of Control by Lord Derby, but somehow having offended the Queen and the Parliament, he resigned from this post in 1858. After this he continued participating in Parliamentary debates, but never again occupied any post of importance. He died on 22 December 1871.

## Viscount Hardinge 1844-48

Henry Hardinge was born on 30 March 1785. His father was Rev. Henry Hardinge, Rector of Stanhope County Durham, his mother being "Frances, daughter of James Best of Boxley in Kent. His family came from King's Norton in Derbyshire, where an ancestor had raised a troop of horses for Charles I and had been knighted at the Restoration<sup>1</sup> of 1660. After getting his education at Durham, Henry joined the Queen's Rangers in Canada in 1800, was promoted Captain in the 57th Foot when he was nineteen, later got training at the Royal Military Academy and doing excellently well there, got an appointment in the Quartermaster-General's staff headed by Sir Bent Spencer. He participated in the Peninsular War, and did so well in the several battles fought in Portugal and elsewhere, that he got speedy promotions from Major to Lieutenant-Colonel, and then Brigadier-General. Henry got wounded four times and had his left arm shot off in one of the battles. Wellington rewarded him with Napoleon's sword after the Waterloo, and he got as many as ten foreign decorations

After the War was over, he was made K.C.B. Later he entered the Parliament, and in 1821 got married in a distinguished family. The famous British statesman Castlereagh and Lord Ellenborough, the Governor-General of India during 1842-44, were his brothers-in-law. After this he got his appointment in the Cabinet as Secretary of War, later on became Chief Secretary for Ireland, declined the offer of the post of Commander-in-Chief of India in 1842, whereafter in 1844 he was appointed Governor-General of India, to succeed his own brother-in-law, Ellenborough, the Governor-General who annexed Sind.

A brave soldier and statesman, Lord Hardinge had thus

1. Mersey, V., *op. cit.*, p. 63.

distinguished himself as a man who always fully understood what he undertook. For twenty years he had been a member of the Parliament, and had also been Secretary of War, thus bringing a rich experience of soldier and politician to bear on the Indian scene.

In India, however, the soldier in Hardinge was more active than the statesman or administrator, and therefore the most important event of his Governor-Generalship was the First Sikh War, in which the great invincible Sikh soldiers for the first time met their effectual defeat, and the Sikh political edifice which had so laboriously been built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh crumbled to pieces.

Before we discuss this important event, a brief reference to his other activities may be made. In his internal administration, the foremost problem that he had to handle was to continue the work on the great scheme of irrigation, known as the Ganges Canal, which had been commenced many years before, but was not opened till 1856. He seems to have worked in this matter with proper zeal, as his son Charles Viscount Hardinge, who was his Private Secretary and biographer, wrote: "The cultivators of the Doab owe a heavy debt of gratitude to the Governor-General for his firmness in this matter."<sup>1</sup> The Calcutta conservancy was reformed. The transit duties between the Indian States of Central India were abolished, and the rivers Sutlej and the Indus were practically freed from these imposts. Under the superintendentship of Dr Jameson, the cultivation of tea was much encouraged, especially in Assam, where a company was also formed for this purpose.

Among his other works was his effort to abolish *sati*. In the British territories it had already been abolished by Lord Bentinck. As a result of his effort, it is said *sati* now remained only in the independent state of Nepal.

Lord Hardinge paid serious attention to the preservation of ancient monuments in India. Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort were repaired, and the unseemly grotesque ornament which had been placed on the top of Kutab Minar was removed.

More important, however, were the military reforms which he introduced after the First Sikh War. These were based on the two principles of maintaining unimpaired the strength of the European troops in India and redistributing the entire army so that the North-Western Frontier and the Punjab might be secured against any contingency. Subject to these principles, no fewer than 50,000 sepoys were disbanded, reducing thereby the strength of the Indian regiments from 1,000 to 800 men each. Despite this, however, "the army was more numerous than it had been in 1837, the last year of

1. Charles Viscount Hardinge, *Viscount Hardinge*, p. 164.

peace in India," writes his son and biographer.<sup>1</sup> Strength of artillery as regards men, was maintained, and the nine-pounders previously drawn by bullocks, were now horsed. The result of all these reforms was that no less than £ 1,160,000 was saved in the military budget.

At the end of the Sikh war, 12 months *bhatta* was granted to the sepoys, and pensions of the wounded men were increased from 4 to 7 rupees a month. Hutting money was disallowed, and all the wounded men received free ration in hospitals.

Among his other works was the order he issued that in future an appointment in a public service would be given only to that person who had received English education. The practice of human sacrifice among the Gonds of the hilly tracts of Orissa was suppressed. Lord Hardinge encouraged free trade, abolished many octroi duties and reduced the duty on salt. Such in brief were the peace time achievements of Lord Hardinge in India.

### THE FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR

Ranjit Singh died in 1839, and hardly six years had passed when this war came. Much has been said regarding the causes of the First Anglo-Sikh War. On 12 December 1845 the Sikh soldiers crossed the river Sutlej, while on 13 December the Governor-General issued his historic proclamation in which he blamed the Sikhs of aggression and declared war on them. Justifying his action, he asserted among other things, that the British had faithfully observed the conditions of the Treaty of Amritsar which had laid down the river Sutlej as the border line between the two governments; that despite "many most unfriendly proceedings on the part of the Durbar, utmost forbearance was shown by the Governor-General;" and that despite "the honest British desire to remain friendly," the Sikh army marched from Lahore by the orders of the Durbar to invade the British territory, and "without a shadow of provocation, invaded the British territories." The Governor-General, thus, while declaring war also announced that all the long coveted territorial possessions of the Lahore Durbar on the left bank of the Sutlej were thereby annexed.

The above proclamation of the Governor-General has been criticised by certain Indian as well as European writers, some of whom try to put the entire blame on the British and prove that the Sikhs have done absolutely nothing that they should not have done; and there are others who say exactly the reverse. A true and impartial observer of facts, however, while blaming the British for their high-handedness, would not fail to discern certain acts of the Sikhs, which

1. Hardinge, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

invited this catastrophe. In fact there were several factors which led to this war, and all of them must properly be scrutinised if we desire to have a true picture of the event.

### **The British Responsibility**

The major responsibility for the first Sikh war lay on the British who had been playing an aggressive part against the Sikh's right since the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809, which itself was considered only to be an instance of Ranjit Singh's weakness. The Anglo-Sikh disputes like that of Wadni in 1823, of Ferozepur in 1835, and of Shikarpur in 1836, all prove this fact. And even before Ranjit Singh's death, after his visit to Lahore in connection with the Tripartite Treaty of 1838, Osborne had remarked in his diary that after the Maharaja's death the first British action should be to march a strong force and occupy the Punjab.

The constantly increasing military pressure of the British on the Sutlej border, before and after the death of Ranjit Singh, under the pretext that it was a precaution against troubles resulting from the possible breakdown of the machinery of the Government at Lahore after Ranjit Singh's death, was bound to provoke the Sikh nation. Yet the British paid no heed. By the treaty of 1809 the British were to withdraw the detachment of the British troops advanced to Ludhiana, but they did not do this. Yet till 1838 the British frontier troops were only one regiment at Sabathu and two at Ludhiana, with six pieces of artillery, the total number of men being a little over 2,500. Auckland raised this total to about 8,000 by adding to Ludhiana and creating a new cantonment at Ferozepur. Ellenborough created new stations at Ambala, Kasauli and Simla and raised the total thus to 14,000 with field guns numbering 48. Lord Hardinge raised the total yet further to 32,000 men and 68 field guns, besides 10,000 of the men with artillery at Meerut.

Then again, the Tripartite Treaty was signed, as we have discussed, between Ranjit Singh, the British and Shah Shuja in 1838. One of the essential terms of the Treaty was that after Shah's success, he would confer Peshawar to the Sikhs. While, despite the Sikh dissatisfaction with the general terms of the Treaty, they were preparing to give an account of their faithfulness to the agreement on the one hand, while on the other, through their agent Macnaughten, the British entered into a secret understanding with Shah Shuja, that when Ranjit Singh's line ended with his grandson, Prince Nau Nihal's death, Shah Shuja would be helped in securing Peshawar. And writes Cunningham: "it would be idle to suppose the Lahore Government ignorant of a scheme which was discussed in official correspondence."<sup>1</sup>

1. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 250-51.

Later, when the British plans in Afghanistan failed, and they had to fight the first Afghan war, under the terms of the Treaty, Henry Lawrence wrote to J.C. Marshman in April 1842, "while the Sikhs were only bound to employ a contingent of 6,000 men, they did the work with not less than 15,000 leaving the stipulated number in position, and withdrawing the rest to Jamrood and Peshawar, where they remained ready to support those in the pass, if necessary."<sup>1</sup> And writing to the Queen on 21 April the Governor-General himself said: "The Sikh army cooperated with that of India by a second pass leading to Ali Masjid, and there is no reason to doubt the good faith of the Sikh Government."<sup>2</sup> Yet when the Sikhs were giving so handsome an account of themselves in fulfilment of their engagements, the British were assembling a third army of "reserve at Ferozepur on the frontier of the Punjab to keep the Sikhs in check." But none among the Sikhs understood what the British wanted to check them from!

Lord Ellenborough himself had in fact commented in a letter to the Home authorities on 30 September 1843: "There does not seem to be any feeling against us (in the Punjab). They are only quarrelling amongst themselves apparently; nor do I see the least show of hostility to us anywhere." Maharaja Sher Singh had been murdered by this time, and even after that, the Governor-General wrote to the Duke of Wellington on 20 November 1843, "that no indication has been given of the least desire to provoke the resentment of the British Government." On 2 July 1844 he wrote further: "In the Punjab there is more of pacific appearance than at any time since the murder of Sher Singh."

Nor did the British leave any stone unturned in their efforts to seduce some influential officers of the Lahore Durbar. When Maharaja Sher Singh gave every cooperation in the first Afghan war, and sent Raja Gulab Singh to help the British against the Afghans in January 1842, it occurred to Henry Lawrence that "a consideration should be offered to Raja Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, for their assistance, they alone in the Punjab being able to give." He wrote on 29 January 1842, "on the terms of efficient support we assist Raja Gulab Singh to get possession of the valley of Jallalabad and endeavour to make some arrangement to secure Peshawar to his family."<sup>3</sup> Similar efforts were made to seduce Tej Singh and Lal Singh, the Poorbia officers of Fort of Rohtas; and some European officers such as General Ventura. And in all this, they succeeded.

On 1 January 1844 the Lahore Durbar learnt that the British were building a fort at Ferozepur. Though this information proved to be

1. Edwards and Merivale, *The Life of Henry Lawrence*, I, p. 363.

2. *ibid.*, p. 407.

3. Edwards, Major-General Herbert, *Biography of Lawrence*, pp. 396-7.

incorrect, on 8 February, it was learnt that a magazine instead, was under construction. On 17 May the report reached that the English were buying large quantities of grain to be stored at Ferozepur, and on 1 June, it was learnt that the English commandant at Ferozepur had directed *zamindars* not to sow any land for an autumn crop as a very large army was to be assembled after the rains. Such British activities obviously perplexed the Sikhs, who could not understand the British actions.

During 1844-45 a large number of boats began to be prepared by the British at Bombay; the purpose being to construct bridges across the Sutlej, and as Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington on 9 May 1844, to "convey troops up and down, and save an enormous charge on the Sutlej." The Sikhs naturally felt apprehensive regarding the British designs. But when asked for the information, the British only replied that the boats were meant to facilitate trade in the Indus and the Sutlej. The Indus navigation schemes having already failed, the British reply was hardly convincing.

The British establishment of a grand supply depot at Basian near Rajkot, strengthened the Sikh doubts. Then, the collection of ordnance and ammunition at Sakkar in Sind to equip a force of 5,000 to march towards Multan, was a subject of ordinary official correspondence. And although Charles Napier, the Governor of Sind, expressed complete ignorance about this correspondence among his subordinates when enquired about by Cunningham, it is difficult to imagine that such activities should not have come to the notice of the Sikhs and thereby caused a provocation in their minds. The character of Napier who had recently annexed Sind in a deceitful manner, was too well known to be ignored.

The British provocations did not end here. They in fact had been planning to attack the Punjab much before the war actually began. As early as 22 October 1841 Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington: "At present about 12,000 men are collected near Ferozepur to watch the Sikhs, and act if necessary. What I desired, therefore, was your opinion, founded as far as it could be upon imperfect geographical information which could be given to you, as to the best mode of attacking the Punjab."

Again, at the same time, John Ludlow writes: "The British agent on the Sutlej had proposed to march on Lahore with 12,000 men to restore order. The Calcutta papers teemed with plans for conquering the Punjab."

The British designs and aggression are also clear from a letter which Duke of Wellington wrote to Lord Fitzgerald on 6 April 1842 at the time the Sikhs were rendering a good service to the British cause in Afghanistan: "I am glad to see such a good account of the



Sikh Government.... But this I may say, if we are to maintain our position in Afghanistan, we ought to have Peshawar, the Khyber Pass, Jallalabad and the passes between that post and Kabul."<sup>1</sup>

These two cases clearly demonstrate the British attitude towards a friendly power. Peshawar belonged to the Lahore Durbār, and if it was to be occupied by the British it could not be done without a war.

There are many other instances<sup>2</sup> of the British provocation to the Sikhs, the mention of which would make the catalogue too lengthy. Only one more instance may be quoted here. Clerk was replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Richmond in June 1843, and the latter by Major Broadfoot in November 1841 as the British frontier agent. Such swift changes perplexed the Sikhs, yet more so when Broadfoot "avowed that he had arranged to occupy the Lahore territory, cis-Sutlej, in case anything should happen to Dalip Singh who was then ill (with small-pox). And he forbade the Durbar to send troops over for any purpose whatever." Further, as Campbell continues, "he acted as if the Lahore territories cis-Sutlej, were entirely under his control.... he seems to have set up a formal claim to such a control, and asserted that this Lahore territory was just as much under his 'jurisdiction', as he called it as any of the small protected States." Not only this, to give his claims a practical shape, when Lal Singh Adalati, a Lahore judge, crossed the Sutlej for some official duty in the Lahore territory at Talwandi, Broadfoot "roughly and very peremptorily ordered the Sikh party back over the river. Lal Singh, not willing to risk a collision, obeyed, returned to the river and embarked his men. But Broadfoot, not satisfied with this, followed them in person.... At least one shot was fired.... the Sikh leaders were captured and detained. The shot then fired has been described as the first in the Sikh war."<sup>3</sup>

Carmichael Smyth wrote "Regarding the Punjab war; I am neither of the opinion that the Sikhs made unprovoked attack, nor that we have acted towards them with great forbearance....besides the Sikhs had translations of Sir Charles Napier's speech stating that we were going to war with them; and as all European powers would have done under the circumstances, the Sikhs thought it as well to be the first in the field. Moreover they were not encamped in our territory, but their own."<sup>4</sup>

### The Other Factors

There were, however, other factors too which made their

1. Chhabra *History of Punjab*, II, Chapter X.

2. *ibid.*, Chapter II. pp. 14-15.

3. Campbell, *Memoirs I*, pp. 75-77.

4. Smyth, Carmichael, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, p. 241.

contribution to bring about the First Sikh War. British India was a big country as compared to the Punjab, and therefore it offered greater opportunities for trade and industry. Yet more so when British India enjoyed a perfect peace, while in Punjab there was nothing but chaos after Ranjit Singh's death. Quite a few Punjab traders therefore corresponded freely with the English merchants in British India, thus developing the British interest on the Punjab.

Nor could the irresponsible state of affairs in the Lahore Army be overlooked. The British failure against the Afghans whom the Khalsa had defeated several times, gave an undue encouragement to the latter, and they were more anxious for a clash with the British than anybody else. Ranjit Singh having failed in establishing a civil supremacy over the military, the military officers became irresponsible after his death, and the Sikh army became a self-governing body by the time of Sher Singh. Its affairs began to be conducted by *panchayats*, or councils of "five" representing each company and elected by soldiers themselves. "In those days power was a dangerous possession. Every State official knew that to incur the displeasure of the army was equivalent to signing his own death warrant."<sup>1</sup> The "gravity of the situation," writes Gough, "was increased by the fear that the very high rate of pay which the Sikh soldiery had extracted for themselves, and the general success which had attended their insubordination, was having an injurious effect on the morale of the sepoys in the British army."<sup>2</sup> The Punjab authorities were themselves rather hard put to it. The military expenditure increased more than two-fold after Ranjit Singh's death, while the State income decreased. It was indeed a difficult problem for the inefficient Lahore rulers to face, and the British grew apprehensive lest they should instigate the Khalsa for a trouble in the north-east, for which in fact the British had been clamouring for long. And this is what actually happened.

The contribution made by the Lahore chiefs must also be mentioned. Moved "as much by jealousy of one another as by a common dread of the army, the chiefs of the Punjab clung to wealth and ease rather than to honour and independence." Their story after the death of Ranjit Singh is too full of treachery, cruelty and bloodshed to be repeated so often. The Dogras in the service of Ranjit Singh had been aspiring to occupy the Punjab throne even during his life time. Raja Dhian Singh, the Prime Minister of the Maharaja, had made special efforts not to permit the heir-apparent Kharak Singh to get training in State craft. His candidate for the throne in fact was his own son Raja Hira Singh and to make his plan succeed he did not hesitate to use any method howsoever mean. He

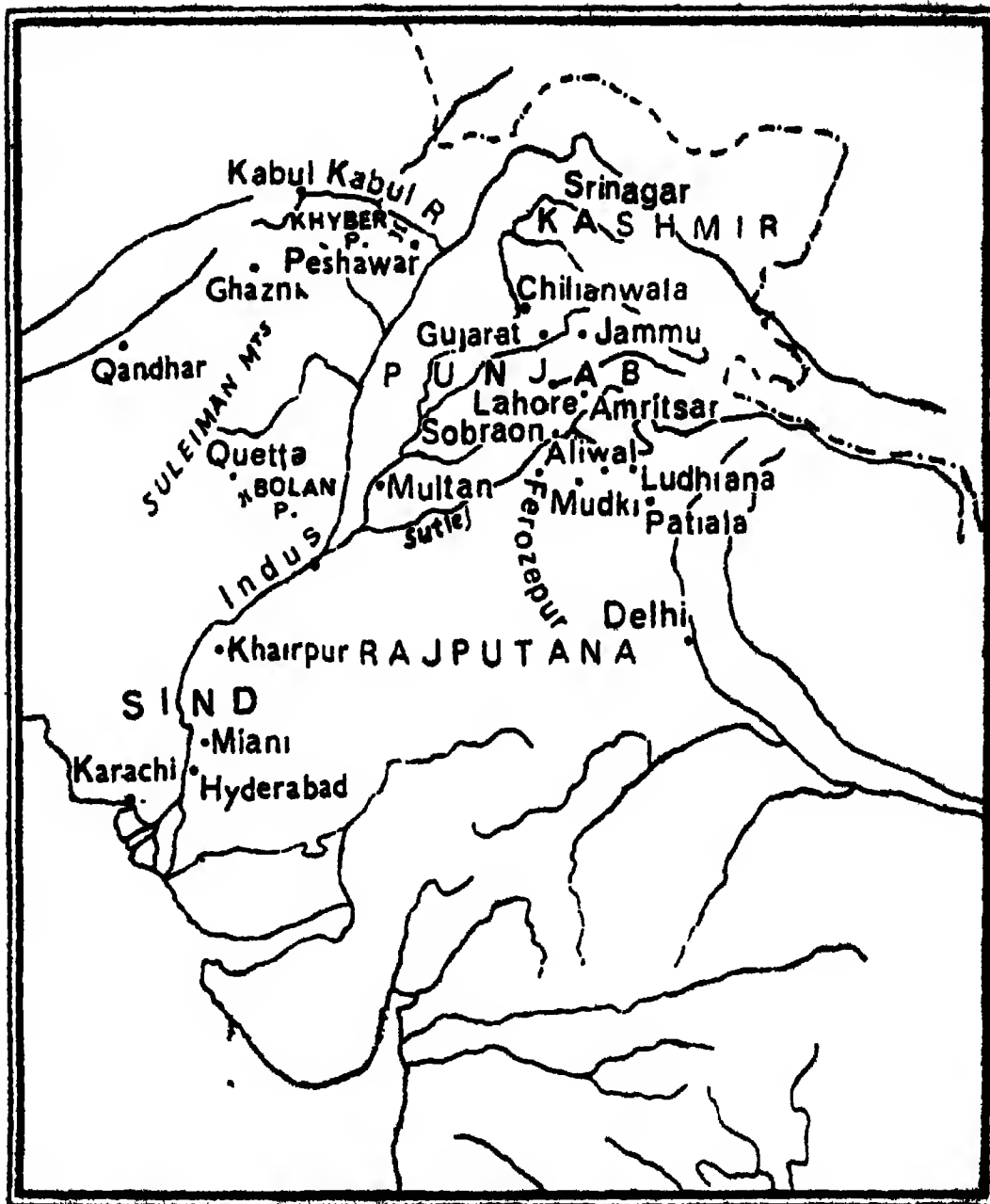
1. Payne, *Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 151; see also *supra*, Chap. 11.
2. Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, (1897), p. 59.
3. Chhabra, *op. cit.*, chapters 13 and 14.

brought Kharak Singh to the throne after Ranjit Singh's death. But shortly after he got him killed by the slow effect of a poison. His son Nau Nihal Singh was next brought to the throne. But he too could not rule for long. A structure of the fort was made to fall upon him, from which he was seriously injured but not killed. He was then put to death. Mai Chand Kaur, the mother of Nau Nihal Singh, next came to the throne. But she refused to adopt Raja Hira Singh as her son, and was brutally beaten to death. Sher Singh, another son of Ranjit Singh, was now brought to power. But he realised the designs of Dhian Singh, and planned to get him murdered. But before he could do so, he fell victim to the gun shot of Ajit Singh Sindhanwalia, who was playing into the hands of Raja Dhian Singh. Ajit Singh, however, was loyal to neither. The very day he shot Sher Singh dead, he had Dhian Singh also done to death. And now came the turn of Hira Singh who marched on Lahore, dispatched Ajit Singh, the Sindhanwalia Sardar, and brought Dalip Singh, another son of Ranjit Singh, to power; himself becoming his Wazir.

After thus capturing the power, however, Hira Singh himself fell under the obnoxious influence of Pandit Julla Missar, a fanatic Brahmin from the mountains. As the grip of this Brahmin over the State affairs tightened, Hira Singh's popularity suffered. He tried to retain his hold by bribing the Sikh soldiery, and thus the army began to increase its political power. There was a contest for *Wuzarat* between Hira Singh, Suchet Singh his uncle and Jawahir Singh, the brother of Maharani Jindan, the mother of Dalip Singh. Similarly, there was a contest for the throne between Kashmira Singh, Peshora Singh, the other two sons of Ranjit Singh, and Maharani Jindan who fought for Dalip Singh. In this each tried to win the support of the army, with the result that all except Jindan and the child Dalip Singh were killed, while the army became supreme. But the life of Jindan also was made only precarious, with the result that she, as according to some writers, inspired the soldiery to cross the river Sutlej, and accept the British challenge. Her purpose, as according to Gough, was that if the Sikh army "were shattered, the court would be rid of its master; if triumphant the court would claim the credit."<sup>1</sup>

Thus different factors led to the First Sikh War. The British had been following an aggressive policy towards the Sikhs from an early time. But while Ranjit Singh was wise and kept them at arm's length, his successors played into the hands of the British. The inexperience of Ranjit Singh's successors, the incapable chiefs of Lahore, the indisciplined Khalsa army, together with inadequate resources and bad strategy brought their downfall.

1. Gough and Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 57.



To illustrate the Anglo-Sikh, Anglo-Afghan and Anglo-Sind Wars

## The War

It would be unnecessary to go into the details of the war itself. The mention only of its most essential events will suffice. After crossing the Sutlej, the best course for the Sikhs should have been to attack Ferozepur where, as Ludlow wrote : "Our garrison of 8,000 men would have been destroyed and the victorious 60,000 would have fallen on Sir Henry Hardinge, who had then but 8,000."<sup>1</sup> But instead of doing that, Lal Singh, the traitorous *wazir* of Lahore, having already been in correspondence with the British Political Agent, addressed Captain Peter Nicholson, the Assistant Agent at Ferozepur thus : "*I have crossed the Sikh army. You know my friendship for the British. Tell me what to do.*" To this Nicholson replied : "*Do not attack Ferozepur. Halt as many days as you can, and then march towards the Governor-General.*"<sup>2</sup>

Under these circumstances, though the army itself "was filled with a vehemently hostile feeling towards the British," with a "strong sense of self-confidence and of loyalty to the Khalsa,"<sup>3</sup> Gough wrote, it was impossible for them to get a victory. As thus arranged, Lal Singh stayed on till Sir Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, brought his main army to the field. The Ambala and Ludhiana divisions of the British arrived at Mudki, 20 miles south-east of Ferozepur, and here the first battle of the Sikh War was fought on 18 December 1845. Lal Singh headed an attack against the British, but just when "the fight was going on with great fierceness on both sides," writes Latif, "Lal Singh, in accordance with his original design, suddenly abandoned the field, leaving the Sikhs to fight as their valour might prompt." The Sikhs fought with an undiminished energy, but ultimately they were routed, and driven from post to post at the point of bayonet. Thus the British got their first victory, though at a very heavy cost.

The second battle was fought at Ferozeshah a village about ten miles both from Mudki and Ferozepur on 21 December 1845. The British had all their preparations, and the Khalsa army was again led by Lal Singh, assisted by Tej Singh. But despite this the resistance the British faced was so unexpected that they startled with astonishment, and were thrown into confusion and disorder. The night that ensued was truly designated a "night of terror". Robert Cust thus wrote in his journal on 22 December : "News came from the Governor-General that our attack of yesterday had failed, that affairs were desperate, that all State papers were to be destroyed, and that if morning attack failed, all would be over; this was kept

1. Ludlow, *British India*, II, p. 142.
2. Kohli S.R., *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, p. 121.
3. Gough, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
4. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 569.

secret by Mr Currie and we were concerting measures to make an unconditional surrender to save the wounded, the part of the news that grieved me the most.”<sup>1</sup>

Had the Sikhs attacked the British at night, the story of the war would have been different. But Lal Singh again played his stipulated role and disappeared all of a sudden. On the morning of 22 December, the remnants of the Sikh forces were easily driven from their camp. But as the day advanced, the second wing of the Sikh army commanded by Tej Singh, who had been urged by his zealous soldiery to fall upon the English, approached in battle-array, “and the wearied and famished English saw before them a desperate and, perhaps useless struggle.” But Tej Singh was no better than Lal Singh. “At eleven o’clock he opened fire on the left of his enemy’s position, and again hesitated. Four hours later he threatened an attack on their right, and then, to the utter astonishment and intense satisfaction of the weary defenders, his whole force was seen to turn suddenly northwards and move off rapidly in the direction taken by the vanquished battalions of Lal Singh.”<sup>2</sup>

As Lal Singh and Tej Singh were thus playing their game, Ranjodh Singh, a loyal Sikh leader, helped by Ajit Singh of Ladwa, attacked Ludhiana with 8,000 men and 70 guns, burning a portion of its cantonment. Sir Harry Smith, with a considerable body of troops, came to the town’s relief, but was intercepted at Badhowal; a number of his men were killed and the whole of his baggage was captured. This happened on 21 January 1846. So heavy was the loss the British suffered at Badhowal that, as in the words of Cunningham, they “looked towards the east, their home; and the brows of Englishmen themselves grew darker at the thought of struggle rather than triumphs ..the leader of the beaten brigades saw before him a tarnished name after the labour of a life.”<sup>3</sup> Shortly after this, however, luckily for the English, Ranjodh Singh withdrew, and as he was retreating, he was attacked by the English at the village of Aliwal at a distance of 8 miles, and as Dr Andrew Adams wrote: “a few shots, and the charge of a squadron or two in pursuit of a host of retreating Sikhs, were magnified into a grand combat, and thus the plain of Aliwal has been recorded as the scene of one of India’s Marathons.”<sup>4</sup>

The last battle was fought at Sobraon, where Lal Singh, Tej Singh and Gulab Singh played traitors. The appeals of the army to Maharani Jindan to supply them with ration and arms went in vain. The Khalsa army was deserted by its leaders who recrossed the

1. Cust, Robert, *Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, VI, p. 43.

2. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

3. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 274.

4. Adams, Dr Andrew, *Wanderings of Naturalist in India*, pp. 60-61.

Sutlej and destroyed the bridge behind them, so that the Khalsa army was stranded, destroyed and drowned. And thus the British won their final victory. Sir Hugh Gough who, however, knew the truth, wrote "Policy prevented me publicly recording my sentiments of the splendid gallantry of a fallen foe, and I declare, were it not from a conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body."<sup>1</sup>

### The Treaty of Lahore

After the Sikhs were thus defeated, the British still could not gather the courage to annex the Punjab, because they knew that in that case even those of the Punjab traitors who had been helping, would turn against them, and in such a circumstance nobody knew what the consequences would be. Lord Hardinge, therefore, decided to watch for a better opportunity, and termed his policy, in the eyes of the world, as 'experimental forbearance', or in other words, it was to give the Sikhs one more chance for peace, from which if they failed, they would invite their doom.

The Treaty of Lahore was thus signed on 9 March 1846; its essential terms being (1) that all the Sikh territories lying south of the river Sutlej which the British had already annexed, would remain with them; (2) that further, the Jullundur Doab, or the territories between the Sutlej and the Beas, would also be handed over to them; (3) that the Lahore Durbar would pay an indemnity of Rs 1½ crores —which, however, they being not able to pay, all the hill territories between the Beas and the Indus including Kashmir and Hazara were to be handed over to the British;<sup>2</sup> (4) that the Durbar would disband its army and keep only 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry; (5) and that the British would be allowed a free passage through the Punjab when necessary. Dalip Singh was recognised as the minor ruler of Lahore. Maharani Jindan was to be his Regent and Lal Singh the Prime Minister. A supplementary treaty was imposed on the Lahore Durbar soon after on 11 March 1846 whereby (1) an adequate British force was to be stationed at Lahore till December 1846, for the protection of Dalip Singh; (2) under the new set up, the bona fide rights of the *jagirdars* in the Lahore territories were to be respected; and (3) the British would be at liberty to retain any part of the state property in the forts situated in the ceded territories, by paying for it a fair compensation.

1. Gough, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

2. And of this, the British sold away Kashmir at a small price to Gulab Singh, as a reward for the support he had given them during the war. See the following chapter.

### The Treaty of Bhairawal

The British had bound themselves under the Treaty of Lahore to withdraw their forces from the Punjab before the end of December 1846. But before the stipulated date for the withdrawal came, the British hatched out a conspiracy to continue their stay. According to the plan, it is the Sikhs who must take the initiative and ask the British to continue the stay of their forces till Maharaja Dalip Singh became major. The Governor-General Lord Hardinge issued instructions to make certain bogus military movements : "My object is to give the Lahore Durbar a hint, that the Garrison is on the move."<sup>1</sup> And in the meanwhile efforts were continued to make some Lahore Chiefs to suggest that the British should stay. The efforts bore fruit, and on 15 December 1846 a conference of those Chiefs who were in favour of the British, was held from which Maharani Jindan, the Regent, was excluded, as an active opposition to the plan was feared from her. The Chiefs put forward a proposal. The British stipulated certain conditions which were all agreed to without discussion or dissent. The next morning, on 16 December the Treaty of Bhairawal was concluded.

Under the new treaty, (1) the British forces were to continue at Lahore till 4 September 1854 when Maharaja Dalip Singh would attain 16 years of age; and till that time, the Durbar would pay Rs 22 lakhs a year to meet the British expenses ; (2) till Dalip Singh became a major, the British Resident, helped by a Council of Regency consisting of 8 Sardars—in which the Resident could make any change or appoint a new man—would govern the Punjab; and (3) besides Lahore, the British forces could be put in any Sikh fortress, the occupation of which, in their opinion, was necessary for the protection of the Maharaja's interests.

This rang the death-knell of the Sikh power, and made the "British the real masters of the Punjab." In fact, Lord Hardinge, who is said to have followed the policy of experimental forbearance, had laid a heavy value even on the treaty of Lahore, as he wrote to Henry Lawrence, the British Resident at Lahore, on 23 October 1847 : "By the Treaty of Lahore, March 1846 the Punjab never was intended to be an independent State... In fact, the native prince is in fetters and our protection, and must do our bidding."<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Bhairawal was a great improvement on that of Lahore in this respect.

1. Edwards and Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, (London, 1872), II, pp. 100-101.
2. *ibid.*



## GULAB SINGH AND THE KASHMIR STATE

Gulab Singh was the instrument of the British in bringing about the end of the Sikh rule, and was given the independent state of Kashmir as a reward by the British. Writing about Gulab Singh in 1847, thus commented Major Carmichael Smyth : "Ambitious, avaricious, and cruel by nature...he deliberately committed the most horrible atrocities for the purpose of investing his name with a terror that should keep down all thoughts of resistance to his cruel sway. With all this he was courteous and polite in demeanour, and exhibited a suavity of manner and language that contrasted fearfully with the real disposition to which it formed an artfully designed but still transparent covering."<sup>1</sup>

"He is an eater of opium," Smyth further quotes a friend of Gulab Singh, "he tells long stories, keeps irregular hours, sleeps little, has a mind unsettled, offers little, promises less, but keeps his word, of good memory, free, humorous and intimate even with the lowest and poorest classes of his subjects. yet with all this, in reality a very leech, sucking their life's blood, the shameless slave trader of their sons and daughters, brothers, wives and families... the very jack of all trades, the usurer, the turn-penny, the briber and the bribed."<sup>2</sup>

Griffin remarked about Gulab Singh and his brother Dhian Singh "their splendid talents and undoubted bravery only render more conspicuous their atrocious cruelty, their treachery, their avarice, and their unscrupulous ambition."<sup>3</sup> Then talking of their descent, he writes of them together with their third brother Suchet Singh, "Whether of princely descent or not, they certainly, in intelligence and personal advantages, were men of great distinction, and eminently deserved their success in a community where honest virtues were ridiculous and violence and fraud could alone ensure victory."<sup>4</sup>

Cunningham, who was also a contemporary of Gulab Singh, while talking of his unscrupulous character, writes : "but it must not therefore be supposed that he is a man malevolently evil. He will, indeed, deceive an enemy and take his life without hesitation, and in the accumulation of money he will exercise many oppressions; but he must be judged with reference to the morality of his age and race, and to the necessities of his own position. If these allowances be made, Gulab Singh will be found an able and moderate man, who does little in an idle or wanton spirit, and who is not without some traits both of good humour and generosity of temper."<sup>5</sup>

1. Smyth, *Reigning Family of Lahore*, p. 257.
2. *ibid.*, p. 258.
3. Griffin Sir Lepel, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 127.
4. *ibid.*, p. 190.
5. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs.*, p. 289.

Gulab Singh was born on 21 October 1792 in the house of one Kishore Singh who was a scion of the celebrated house of Dhrov Deo who ruled Jammu, and whose son Ranjit Singh Deo subdued many petty hill rajas like those of Kishtwar, Chaneni and Bhadarwah. Kishore Singh, however, was far removed from this ruling family of his collaterals, had absolutely no pretensions to richness or a position, and lived a simple life at Akhnur. His father Zorawar Singh had a jagir at Dayaun near Sambha, and it is with him that Gulab Singh spent his childhood days.<sup>1</sup>

Gulab Singh grew up illiterate and unlettered, though he had his share of training in the arts of horse-riding, swordsmanship and archery in which soon he was to make a mark. The opportunity came in 1808 when things at Jammu fell into a confusion under Jit Singh, the nephew and successor of Brij Lal Deo. Ranjit Singh sent his troops to annex the State. In the battle that ensued Gulab Singh appeared on the side of his collaterals, impressed his opponents with his prowess, and soon, after Jammu passed under the suzerainty of Lahore, he secured a service with the Sikh Maharaja as a *Ghorcharah* soldier. According to Smyth, "He was introduced to the Maharaja by Missr Dewan Chand who had marched the Sikh troops to Jammu, and he and his younger brother Dhian Singh were appointed at "three rupees each per diem."<sup>2</sup> "The two brothers were the most favoured of all Ranjit Singh's favourites; it is supposed, however, that Goolauboo (Gulab Singh) would not endure the Maharajah's intimacy as his brother did. In 1813 they, at Ranjeet's request, sent for their younger brother Suchetoo (Suchet Singh), now a lad of about twelve years old; whose handsome face and graceful person immediately won for him the entire regard of the Maharajah. The Rajpoot brothers were now all in all at Court."<sup>3</sup>

Gulab Singh played a prominent role in the Sikh expedition to Kashmir in 1814. When the Sikh forces marched to Multan in 1818, Gulab Singh accompanied them. During the siege of the fort, a favourite Sikh Sardar of Ranjit Singh fell dead at the foot of the fort wall. When none else could dare ride to the spot under the heavy cannon fire to bring back the dead body, Gulab Singh offered

1. Gulab Singh's mother was Mahadevi, the daughter of Rana Kishan Pal of Maharta near Basohli, who was said to have been buried alive after her birth, as her parents did not want to suffer the shame of a female child, but was later dug up and found alive. See Narsing Das Nargis, *Dewan Gulab Singh*, pp. 1-5.
2. Smyth, *op. cit.*, p. 250; according to Shahmat Ali, *Sikhs and Afghans*, p. 92, Gulab Singh was entertained at Rs 2 a day. *Gulbnama* of Kirpa Ram, however, asserts that he was immediately taken as commander of a regiment at Rs 275 per month, and K.M. Panikkar, *The Founding of the Kashmir State*, p. 19, believes this.
3. Smyth, pp. 250-51.

himself and accomplished the job which won him great appreciation from the Maharaja. Likewise he distinguished himself at many other places as for instance against Yusuf tribe at the time of the conquest of Peshawar in 1819, and went on amassing rewards in the shape of jagirs and valuable presents of cash, jewellery and other articles.

Jammu, after its conquest, had been allotted as jagir to Kharak Singh. His agents, however, could not establish law and order in the territory, particularly because some of the valiant Rajputs of the place refused to reconcile themselves to the Sikh yoke. Among them sprang up one Mian Dedo who soon became popular in the surrounding areas, raised a band of followers and spread his depredations all around. Gulab Singh offered himself for the job, and was permitted to march to the province where soon, by using force, diplomacy and cajolery, he had Dedo killed and reduced the rebellious elements to submission, in appreciation of which the territory was farmed out to him in 1820.

After this Gulab Singh began to spend most of his time at Jammu where, by his representations to the Maharaja that it was not easy to collect revenues without using force, he was permitted to raise his own troops. Dhian Singh in the meanwhile had in 1819 been appointed *Sadar-i-deori*, or Minister in charge of the royal household which gave him a considerable influence over the Maharaja. Gulab Singh therefore could rest assured that during his absence from Lahore, his brother would be able effectively to look after his interests with the Sikh ruler.

In 1821 Gulab Singh conquered Kishtawar for the Sikh Raj. He also reduced Rajouri to which he was specially asked to lead an expedition. The Rajput Raja of Rajouri who had given some special cause of enmity to Ranjit Singh, was captured. All this raised him yet further in the eyes of the Maharaja, and Gulab Singh was now given the hereditary title of Raja with the grant of Jammu as principality, to him and his successors in perpetuity. Ranjit Singh himself performed the *Raj tilak* at the Akhnur fort and granted him the *sanad* on 16 June 1822.<sup>1</sup>

After this Gulab Singh continued his exploits, extending his territories and helping the Lahore Durbar whenever and wherever his services were needed. Most important of his conquests was that of Ladakh in 1834 done by his General Zorawar Singh. His other brothers also steadily rose in positions and importance, with the result that before Ranjit Singh died, Dhian Singh enjoyed jagirs which brought him an annual income of about three lakh rupees. Suchet Singh's jagirs were worth slightly over three lakhs; Hira Singh's were worth 4 lakh 62 thousand rupees per annum, while those of Gulab

1. Panikkar, K.M., *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34.

Singh brought him an annual revenue of Rs 7,37,287. The more important places which Gulab Singh held in jagir besides the Jammu province, were Akhnur, Parmandil Rihasi, Kishtwar, Ram Garh, Bhimber and Dera Baba Nanak.<sup>1</sup>

*Intrigue with the British.* Gulab Singh had developed an almost independent power in the Jammu province, and had sent expeditions to Ladakh and onwards in a bid to occupy Lhasa on his own which was not liked by the rulers at Lahore. His ambitions to occupy Kashmir also were not unknown. Nor was the preponderance of Dhian Singh in the Lahore Government looked on without foreboding by the other Lahore chiefs who suspected him of designs to place his own son Raja Hira Singh on the Sikh throne. Dhian Singh was blamed of having brought about the death of Hari Singh Nalwa, the famous General of Ranjit Singh, by his machination which did not permit reinforcements to reach him when he was hardpressed on the frontiers. He with his other brothers was said to have been responsible for the lack of training in state-craft to Kharak Singh. After the death of Ranjit Singh, when Kharak Singh's closeness to Chet Singh threatened Dhian Singh's position as Chief Minister, he brought about the death of Chet Singh. The three brothers might have liquidated Kharak also but for the timely presence of Mai Chand Kaur and her son Nau Nihal Singh. The latter prince, when he came to power, tried to surround the Dogra hill dominions in a bid to finish their power, but before he could do anything substantial in this respect, an archway crumbled over his head by the hands of destiny or those of the intriguing Dogras.

Of all the Lahore chiefs, Dogras alone had been granted contiguous and vast hereditary jagirs. They therefore developed vested interests not only on lands but also on positions. Gulab Singh's strength in Jammu, strengthened Dhian Singh in his office at Lahore, while the latter's influence as Chief Minister gave security to the former's dominion in the hill province. They therefore could afford to lose neither one nor the other. They considered their claims to offices and jagirs as matter of fact as the royal family its royalty. Both were based only on force and fraud.

It was only for a short while that the events placed Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh in opposite camps when the former supported Chand Kaur and defended her against the troops of Sher Singh who had invaded Lahore under the inspiration of the latter.<sup>2</sup> Peace was restored when Dhian Singh arrived from Jammu and the immense wealth which Gulab Singh took away from the royal treasury could be done neither without an active connivance of the former, nor without leaving a bitter taste in the mouth of Sher Singh who found

1. Shahmat Ali, *Sikhs and Afghans*, pp. 103-06.

2. *supra*, Mai Chand Kaur.

no wherewithal to clear the arrears of pay of the Khalsa soldiery who because of that became turbulent and brought about an ultimate ruin of the Sikhs. Had Sher Singh lived a little longer, he would definitely have brought about an end to Gulab Singh's power in Jammu, just as he wanted to get rid of Dhian Singh at Lahore. Efforts of one succeeding prince after another at Lahore to destroy the Dogras, and those of the Dogras to have them poisoned, crushed under the archway, beaten to death or shot from a double barrel gun could therefore be considered only complementary to each other.

Little wonder under these circumstances Gulab Singh found it necessary to intrigue with the Afghans on the frontiers and the British in India to safeguard his own interests and to carve out an independent kingdom for himself in the hills. The end of the Lahore kingdom prompted him to do so. Dhian Singh was murdered and Suchet Singh was killed while trying to snatch away the Chief Ministership from his brother's son Hira Singh. The British schemes of establishing independent principality of Gulab Singh at Jallalabad were not unknown to the Khalsa army. They should have had him also murdered if it had materialised. This did not happen. Yet Gulab Singh was not safe. He clashed with Raja Hira Singh on the treasures left by Suchet Singh, and the two could have peace only after exchanging hostages. Smyth however found these differences between uncle and nephew only feigned, for crafty Gulab Singh wanted to safeguard the ultimate Dogra interests behind this smoke screen<sup>1</sup>. Yet no one could deny that Gulab Singh's position, as also his life, was in danger, and an "ambitious and avaricious" man as he was, he tried to save his skin simultaneously with an effort to get Chief Ministership at Lahore when he was brought there after the murder of Hira Singh by the orders of Jindan<sup>2</sup>. He could not pay a fine of three crore rupees, he came to Lahore surrounded by the Khalsa whom he had won over only by cajolery, as also by bribes.<sup>3</sup> He was half in despair, yet half in hope to succeed his nephew as Chief Minister. He was received well by Jindan, but Rani's brother Jawahir Singh foiled his hopes for the office, and he retired again to Jammu disillusioned and only with a promise to

1. Smyth, C., *op. cit.*, pp. 121-22.

2. *Supra*, *Causes of First Anglo-Sikh War*.

3. Smyth relates how, when Gulab Singh was surrounded by the Khalsa army at Jammu, he saved his life by pleading that he was the last of the Dogra family who knew where the treasures lay buried. "To enforce and illustrate the declaration, he would direct the Seiks to repair to certain places around Jummoo, where, by attending to the marks and signs which he gave them, they found large sums of buried money, fifteen, twenty, and even forty thousand rupees in one place, and which but for Goolaub's disclosure might have lain hid for ever. It was thus that the Rajah gained the title which the soldiers bestowed on him of the *Soona Ki Kookoree*, or the Golden Hen." Smyth, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

pay a fine of 65 lakh rupees to the Durbar. After Jawahir Singh, another opportunist, Lal Singh occupied the office of Chief Minister. The things deteriorated and the Sikh forces crossed the Sutlej which brought about a clash with the British. As the war started going against the Durbar, everybody thought that Gulab Singh alone could save the situation. He was summoned, appointed Chief Minister, and asked to negotiate peace. But he knew the moment peace was established, Lal Singh, the paramour of Jindan, would again have an upper hand, and he would lose once again, not only his office at Lahore, but also his estates in Jammu. Little wonder, when he met the Governor-General to sign a peace treaty, his intention was not to bring out the Lahore Durbar unscathed. While intending to reduce the military strength of the Durbar which should no more be a menace to anybody even under ambitious and crafty Lal Singh, "he suddenly perplexed the Governor-General by asking what he was to get for all he had done to bring about a speedy peace and to render the army an easy prey."<sup>1</sup>

Gulab Singh has been criticised by the apologists of the Sikh rule, and the pseudo moralists both Indian and European for his treachery against the Lahore Durbar and illicit connections with the British which he tried early to develop in order to have his independence in his hill State recognised. He is said to have misappropriated the revenues due to the Lahore Government, and had usurped half of the tributary hill States of the Sikhs. Since 1836, he had been attempting to seize Kashmir.<sup>2</sup> He intrigued against the Lahore Durbar "which produced a *jehad* in Muzaffarbad and the other hill States bordering Kashmir." In 1844 he approached the British offering to help them develop their hold on Punjab if they recognised "his independent sovereignty in the hills."<sup>3</sup> He did so again in 1845, and "agreed to aid the British with his hill levies if they attempted to take possession of the Punjab." This he did in February, and in August again he "offered to destroy the Sikh army with 50,000 hill levies and facilitate the British occupation of Lahore." "As a general commanding two divisions of the Sikh army, and a feudatory vassal of the Lahore Government, he had defied the orders of the Durbar and sent evasive answers, when after Mudki and Ferozeshah, he was ordered to reinforce the Sikh armies on the Sutlej."<sup>4</sup> After Aliwal when pressed by the Durbar to take charge as Wazir, he arrived at Lahore and he immediately communicated "with the British authorities, assuring them of his loyalty and supplying them information." After the defeat at Sobraon, "Overawed by the skilful knavery of their Vazir, the Rani and the chiefs signed a Declaration on 15 February 1846, signifying to abide by whatever terms Gulab Singh might

1. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

2. Hasrat, Bikrama Jit, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p. 19.

3. *ibid.*, p. 237, quoting contemporary British records.

4. *ibid.*, pp. 243, 254, 255, 284, 385, quoting.

determine with the British." He met the Governor-General on behalf of the Durbar to sign peace, but bluntly demanded "what he was to get for all he had done."

"On 18 February, the young Maharaja was brought to the Governor-General's camp at Kasur for the ratification of the treaty. Gulab Singh suggested that the Maharaja should not be allowed to return to the Rani, intimating plainly, that it was for the Governor-General to dispose of the young chief as he pleased. Hardinge credulously looked at the functionary of the Sikh Government, he praised him for his neutrality, but discreetly ignored his ignominious suggestion."<sup>1</sup>

All this lengthy record of intrigues on the part of Gulab Singh should indeed earn him an unequivocal censure of history. His last act whereby he proposed even the deceitful detention of the Maharaja as custodian of whose interests he met the Governor-General, may well fit him into the title of a crafty, brazen-faced hypocrite, yet he is to be considered in light of all the murders of the members of his family at Lahore, in the light of the serious dangers to which his own position and life were exposed, and in the light of the character of the shameless, egocentric, opportunist and irresponsible forces that the Khalsa army, the ruling princes, the Ranis and their Wazirs at Lahore had become.

Be that as it may, Gulab Singh was instrumental in the conclusion of the Treaty of Lahore on 9 March 1846 which for obvious reasons he himself did not sign. Under this treaty, in lieu of a part of indemnity, the Lahore Government handed to the British all the hill territories between the rivers Indus and Beas, including Kashmir and Hazara. Kashmir was sold away, in reward for valuable services, to Gulab Singh under a separate Treaty of Amritsar signed with him on 15 March 1846, against a payment of one crore rupees which was later reduced and made further easy of liquidation.

*An Independent Ruler.* The Treaty of Amritsar said: "The British Government transfers and makes over for ever in independent possession to Maharajah Gulab Singh and the heirs male of his body all the hilly or mountaineous country with its dependencies situated to the east of the River Indus and the west of the River Ravi including Chamba and excluding Lahul, being part of the territories ceded to the British Government by the Lahore State." The eastern boundary of this territory was to be laid down by a commission appointed by the British and Gulab Singh. In return the Maharaja was to submit his disputes with the neighbouring States for arbitration to

1. *ibid.*, p. 286, quoting records.



the British, was to help the British with his troops when required, was never to employ a European or an American without the British consent, and acknowledged the British supremacy in token of which he would annually present "one horse, twelve shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Cashmere shawls."<sup>1</sup>

Thus was the present State of Jammu and Kashmir created. Gulab Singh had at initial stages to face some trouble when under instigation of Lal Singh, the Chief Minister of Punjab, the Sikh Governor of Kashmir refused to surrender the valley. The British helped him to get it, while Lal Singh was tried, condemned, removed from office, and banished from Punjab.

Gulab Singh slowly consolidated his possessions and introduced several reforms in the Kashmir administration. Shawl industry was reorganised; *begar* or forced labour, was removed; and several rebellions on the frontiers were suppressed. Towards the later years of his life, Gulab Singh suffered from dropsy. In February 1856 he formally installed his only surviving son, Ranbir Singh on the throne and accepting the position of Governor of Kashmir, himself retired to the valley. He was on his deathbed when the Indian Mutiny broke out in 1857. He ordered Dogra troops to march to Delhi where they helped the British to get back its possession. He died in August 1858 at the age of sixty-six.

Coming back to the Treaty of Amritsar under which the State of Jammu and Kashmir was transferred by Hardinge to Gulab Singh for one crore rupees, it may be mentioned that a part of this money was paid by him from the treasury of Kashmir which, Kashmir being a part of the Lahore kingdom, belonged in fact to Maharaja Dalip Singh. Commenting on this Cunningham wrote: this "transaction scarcely seems worthy of the British name and greatness, and the objections become stronger when it is considered that Gulab Singh had agreed to pay sixty lakhs of rupees (£ 680,000), as a fine to his paramount (Lahore Durbar), before the war broke out, and the custom of the East as well as of the West requires the feudatory to aid his lord in foreign war and domestic strife. Gulab Singh ought thus to have paid the deficient million of the money as a Lahore subject, instead of being put in possession of Lahore provinces as an independent prince." Later on Cunningham writes "payments required from him were reduced by a fourth, and they were rendered still more easy of liquidation by considering him to be the heir to the money which his brother Suchet Singh had buried in Ferozepur."<sup>2</sup> Gordon writes that it was indeed, "a very bad bargain for the Government, which unfortunately was rendered necessary by the

1. Panikkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-15.

2. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 288.



political exigency of the moment.”<sup>1</sup>

Almost immediately after Kashmir was transferred to Gulab Singh, some critics of Hardinge began to term it a ‘political mistake’. It was suggested that with its congenial climate and fertile lands, the valley could easily be colonised by the Englishmen and developed into a ‘miniature England in the heart of Asia.’<sup>2</sup>

But Hardinge had some strong reasons in 1846 when the valley was transferred. It must be remembered that the Punjab was not annexed after the First Sikh War, and Hardinge had hoped that with the British help it would be established as a strong and independent buffer state which would be able to absorb any hostile thrusts against the British in the north-west. As such, the annexation of Kashmir should have involved the maintenance of a long line of communication from the Sutlej, at a distance of 300 miles through the lands of people the character of whom was not yet fully understood. Nor was Hardinge anxious by annexing Kashmir, to come into collision with the powerful frontier tribes, particularly after the experience the British had gained from the First Afghan War. He thought it prudent therefore to keep it independent, so that this state and the Punjab would keep the frontier tribes in check; and besides, it would establish itself as a counterpoise to the Sikhs, thus keeping the British frontier on the Sutlej peaceful and safe. Hardinge also wanted to show to the princes and other chiefs of India, the advantages that could accrue from a faithful adherence to the British interest.

But the situation soon changed when the non-annexation of the Punjab itself after the First Sikh War, began to be considered a mistake. New pretexts were raised to perpetuate the British presence in the Punjab, and simultaneously to interfere in the Kashmir State and develop the British hold thereon. The excuse of the oppressive and inefficient administration of Gulab Singh became handy, and Hardinge wrote to the Maharaja in 1848: British “are bound by no obligation to force the people to submit to a Ruler who has deprived himself of their allegiance by his misconduct.” And he declared, that a “direct interference must be resorted to”<sup>3</sup> where the ruler has failed. .

The enquiries held, however, failed to prove the charges of oppression against the Maharaja, and in the meanwhile, Hardinge retired. His successor, Lord Dalhousie, was a rank annexationist. If there was no cause to interfere in the internal affairs of Kashmir,

1. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

2. Wakefield, W., *The Happy Valley* (1879) pp. 85-86, quoted by Kapur, M.L., *Kashmir Sold and Snatched* (1968), pp. 9-10.

3. Quoted, Kapur, M.L., *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 23.

he was anxious to create one. Every summer a number of Europeans began to visit the valley, and often misbehaved. The Maharaja complained to this effect to the British. Dalhousie jumped at the opportunity, and proposed that a British officer may be appointed in the valley to control their conduct. The Maharaja was alarmed, and was sure that any such appointment would surely be a prelude to the imposition of a Resident on the state. He tried to argue himself out of the situation, but the Governor-General would not allow him to escape. In 1852, therefore, the Maharaja had to agree to the appointment of such an officer who would be known as the "officer on Special Duty in Kashmir," and who would return when the European visitors left the valley after the summer months were over.

The Treaty of Amritsar had given Kashmir a special status as compared to the other Indian principalities. It was almost to be an independent state, with no British Resident to interfere in its internal affairs. But the appointment of the "Officer on Special Duty compromised that special status of Kashmir, and a beginning was made towards bringing it completely under the British as we shall subsequently see.

Lord Hardinge personally took part in the Sikh War, and his greatness lay in the fact that he insisted on working for this purpose under his own Commander-in-Chief, Gough. In 1848 he retired from his office in India at his own request. Back in England, he was made Commander-in-Chief of the English army in 1852. The Crimean War that followed shortly after, however, proved too heavy a burden on his advanced age. He became Field-Marshal in 1855, but the very next year he was attacked by paralysis and died on 24 September 1856 at the ripe age of seventy-one. Lord Hardinge of Penshurst who became the Viceroy of India after fifty-four years of his death, was his grandson.

## 9

### Marquess of Dalhousie (1848-56)

James Andrew Brown Ramsay who later succeeded his father as tenth Earl, and became also the Marquess of Dalhousie, was born on 22 April 1812. His father commanded a regiment at Waterloo, later became Governor-General of Canada, and then Commander-in-Chief in India. His mother was the heiress of the Browns of Colstoun in Haddingtonshire. James got his education at Harrow, then at the Christ Church, Oxford where the future Viceroy of India, Elgin and Canning, were among his friends. In 1835 James contested in the general elections at Edinburgh but lost. In 1836 he married Susan Hay, the eldest daughter of the eighth Marquess of Tweeddale. In 1837 he became M.P. for Haddingtonshire, succeeded to the Earldom at the death of his father in 1838, was appointed by Sir Robert Peel as the Vice-President of the Board of Trade in 1843, and then President in 1845, and in 1847 Lord John Russell appointed him the Governor-General of India.

“Small of stature, but with a noble head, a most penetrating glance, and a haughty demeanour, ‘the little man’ of Government House first inspired awe in those who came in contact; then trust; and finally an ardent admiration in which loyalty to the master mingled strangely with personal love.”<sup>1</sup>

The best known feature of Dalhousie’s Governor-Generalship in India is his policy of ruthless annexations of which he made no secret. He openly declared : “No man can deprecate more than I do any extension of the frontiers of our territory which can be avoided or *which may not become indispensably necessary for consideration of our own safety*, and of the maintenance of tranquillity of your provinces. But I cannot conceive it possible for any one to dispute the policy of taking advantage of every *just opportunity* which presents itself for consolidating the territories which

1. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

already belong to us by taking possession of states which may lapse in the midst of them; for thus getting rid of those petty intervening principalities which may be made means of annoyance, but which can never, I venture to think, be a source of strength : for adding to the resources of the public treasury : and for extending the uniform application of our system of Government to those whose best interests we sincerely believe, will be protected thereby." The meaning is very much clear. Thompson and Garratt have tried to justify Dalhousie's actions in this respect by saying that "Dalhousie entered on an out-moded system, which in fact broke down under his vigorous administration."<sup>1</sup> But this view may be no better than the one gathered through red glasses of imperialistic bias as the following pages will reveal.

### The Second Anglo-Sikh War

The most important event of the time of Lord Dalhousie was the annexation of Punjab. Under the Treaty of Bhairawal, the British were to withdraw themselves from the Punjab on 4 September 1854. But much before that date, they started seeking an excuse to annex this state, and thus to finish the whole game. The opportunity came, it was taken, converted into the Second Sikh War, and the Punjab was annexed.

*The Causes.* There were causes which brought about the opportunity. The reaction of the general mass of the people towards the new set-up under the British was hardly encouraging. The Sikhs, writes Payne, "welcomed the new order of things with anything but enthusiasm."<sup>2</sup> They felt that their position as the ruling community was undermined. Many of the more well-to-do Sikhs lived on rent-free lands, and it made no difference to them whether rates of assessment were high or low, unless they happened to be collectors of revenue. Moreover, the British social reforms such as the suppression of female infanticide and abolition of *sati*, were regarded by all as an interference in their religious practices, and this was hardly a thing which many among the Hindus or the Sikhs could tolerate.

Nor were the Sikh soldiers prepared to consider their defeat as anything but a matter of chance. This was obvious, Cunningham writes, when at the time of their disbandment they "showed neither despondency of mutinous rebels nor the effrontery and indifference of mercenaries."<sup>3</sup> They, moreover, considered the treachery of their leaders as a cause of their defeat. Having full confidence in the future of the Khalsa they would assert amid their humiliations that, as time passed, the Sikh commonwealth were bound to be clothed in victory

1. Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fall of British Rule in India*, p. 350.

2. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

3. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

by Guru Gobind Singh, not only over the English, but over the whole world.

The disbanded Sikh soldiers also created a problem. Although they had been paid their arrears by the Durbar, they had not been guided into peaceful employments. They lived by methods which were by no means facilitated by the growth of law and order, and every measure which tended to promote public security increased their discontent. Moreover, when these unemployed soldiers moved from village to village, they received no welcome from the local populace. They only met taunts. If another chance for a trial of strength with the British came, they were naturally anxious to welcome it.

Nor were all the Lahore chiefs satisfied. Their object, writes Cunningham, "was not to compromise themselves with the English by destroying an isolated division but to get their own troops dispersed by the covering forces of their opponents. Their desire was to be upheld as the ministers of a dependent kingdom by grateful conquerors."<sup>1</sup> But the reward the most of them received after getting their countrymen slaughtered, was anything but satisfactory. Lal Singh, was the most discontented man. While Gulab Singh, playing a less traitorous role against the Khalsa, had secured the state of Kashmir as his reward, Lal Singh got nothing. Mere prime ministership could not satisfy him, and hardly had the ink on the Treaty of Lahore dried, when he began intrigues against the British, and was banished from the country.

Maharani Jindan too was not satisfied with the new arrangement. The Treaty of Bhairawal was signed against her wishes, as she did not want that the British should continue in the Punjab. The punishment she got for this attitude was that she was removed from the regency of her son, and began now to be very closely watched.

Almost all the above referred to factors led to the Second Sikh War. However they were only an outcome of the British aggressiveness towards the Punjab. After the First Sikh War if the Punjab had not been annexed, it was hardly British "dignified forbearance and moderation in the hour of strength," as it was claimed. It was rather as we have stated above, that they dared not all of a sudden alienate the entire mass of their supporters in that State, but for whose help perhaps the whole future history of the British empire in India should have been different. Besides, there were other considerations against the annexation, as Sir Robert Peel, the British Prime Minister wrote to Lord Hardinge: "that the annexation of the Punjab would have been a source of weakness and not of strength, that it would have extended our frontier at the greatest distance from our resources and on the weakest points that you would have been with

1. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

reference to Afghanistan and all the bordering countries in a much worse position than you were in September last."<sup>1</sup> Then it was also felt that if the Punjab was annexed, it would be difficult to tame the Sikhs. Nor was it supposed that the Punjab would be a productive land, so as to prove rather to be a source of strength than weakness.

But once the British established their hold over the country all these considerations vanished one after another. All those who had supported the British being disposed of one by one, they had none more to fear. They also discovered that the annexation of the Punjab would not after all be a source of weakness, but that of strength. As for finances, if properly organised, the State was a surplus one.

"The cotton of the Punjab was one of the chief attractions to the British who foresaw in the Land of Five Rivers a favourable market for the consumption of their goods. While Amritsar offered the prospects of an *entre pot* for the Punjab and the hill territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Multan and Peshawar promised to become advanced depots for British trade in Afghanistan and regions beyond the Oxus.

"The Punjab also offered vast opportunities of employment for a large number of British civilians. It also offered facilities of extensive cantonments and mountainous training grounds."<sup>2</sup> And the hardy and robust Sikhs if recruited into the British forces and trained under the European methods, could bring the British victories in any part of the world.

In order to strengthen their hold over the country, the treaty of Bhairawal was imposed. A policy of ruthless extermination of the Sikhs was followed, and all the key-positions one after the other were given over to the English. Considering the people barbaric the civilised rule of the British over them was considered in the words of Henry Lawrence as their salvation. Active interference began to be made in the life of the people to reform it.

The treatment meted out to Maharani Jindan needs a special mention. After her exclusion from the treaty of Bhairawal without definite proofs, she was blamed of having intrigued against the British, her pension was reduced from Rs 1½ lakhs a year to Rs 48,000 and she was compulsorily retired to Sheikhopur. Here her political influence, whatever it was, completely ended. But still she was harassed, her pension was reduced further to Rs 12,000, and dispossessed of her jewellery, she was exiled to Benaras. "Such a treatment is objectionable, and both high and low prefer death,"

1. Hardinge, Charles Second Viscount, *Viscount Hardinge*, pp. 143-44.
2. Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence Relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars*, p. 165.

wrote Dost Muhammad. The Khalsa army was disurbed, and it was considered by the people "as a national insult, and as a preliminary step to the dethronement of her son, and the destruction of the state."<sup>1</sup>

To test whether the British were actually bent upon destroying the career of Dalip Singh, Chuttur Singh the Nazim of the Hazara District proposed that the marriage of the Maharaja who was betrothed to his daughter, should immediately be solemnised. But to this proposal he got only a stiff and negative official reply from the Resident, which confirmed the suspicion in the Sikh minds. Chuttur Singh got still another blow when his adviser, Captain Abbot, an assistant of the Resident about whom the latter had already remarked that though an excellent officer, "he is too apt to take gloomy views of a question," all of a sudden developed suspicion that Chuttur Singh was preparing for a revolt, removed his residence at a distance of 30 miles from that of his, aroused Mohammedan peasantry to revolt against him, and induced Colonel Conora, an American officer in Chuttur Singh's service, to disobey the Sardar's orders. Although the Resident condemned Abbot's action in his private correspondence, no explanation was given to Chuttur Singh whose suspicions were confirmed, and he together with his son Sher Singh, a member of the Council of Regency, decided to join Mulraj of Multan who had already broken into a revolt.

A considerable change in the situation was also effected at this stage, as a result of the arrival in India, in 1848, of the new Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, a rank annexationist. His arrival in fact initiated a change in the whole policy and methods of the Supreme Government. Able, energetic, resolute and entirely self-confident, he was a born autocrat to whom it seemed obvious that the "extension of the British rule was necessarily for the benefit of the ruled."<sup>2</sup>

There was now a man to take the opportunity, and the opportunity which proved to be the immediate cause of the Second Sikh War had come when an outbreak occurred at Multan. Mulraj, the Nizam of Multan, had fallen into arrears of the payment of revenue. When called upon to clear his accounts, he rather submitted his resignation. Kahn Singh accompanied by two British officers, P.A. Vans Agnew and Lieutenant W.A. Anderson was sent to take charge of the Government from Mulraj. The charge was peacefully handed over, and Mulraj galloped off the city. But while returning from the fort to their camp the British officers were suddenly attacked by a guard at the gate, and were severely wounded. This was a signal for the outbreak. Men were sent after Mulraj who was forced to come back

1. Bell, Evans, *Annexation of the Punjab* (London 1822), p. 20.

2. Gough, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

and lead the revolt. Despite Mulraj's efforts to save the British officers who had escaped wounded to a nearby mosque, the rebels turned the guns of the fort on the mosque and they were killed.

Lieutenant Edwards, the officer-in-charge of Derajat, getting the news, marched accompanied by General Cortland from Rannu and some loyal troops of the Nawab of Bahawalpur; Mulraj was defeated in two pitched battles, after which he shut himself up in the fort. An urgent call for additional troops and siege-guns was sent. But the high British authorities delayed the action studiously. In the meanwhile the Mutiny having spread in other parts of the country, war was declared.

*The War.* Lord Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, reached Lahore with the grand army of the Punjab on 13 November. On 22, the rebels were defeated in a battle at Ramnagar. Another indecisive action was fought at Sadullapur on 3 December. The third battle was fought on 13 January 1849 at Chelianwala where, according to Lionel James Trotter, the British suffered a loss "unequalled in the record of Indian battles."<sup>1</sup> "When the news of Chelianwala reached England, the nation was stricken with profound emotion." Preparations were made to replace Lord Gough. But in the meanwhile, on February 21, Lord Gough met the Sikhs in another battle at Gujarat. The Sikhs were utterly routed, surrendered themselves at Rawalpindi, and thus the game came to an end.

### ANNEXATION OF THE PUNJAB

A Durbar was held at Lahore by Sir Henry Elliot, the Foreign Secretary, on 29 March 1849. Here a proclamation of the Governor-General was read out which ran thus :

"The Sikh people and their chiefs have on their part grossly and faithlessly violated the promises by which they were bound. Of their annual tribute no portion whatever has at any time been paid and large loans advanced to them by the Government of India have never been paid. The control of the British Government to which they voluntarily submitted themselves, has been resisted by arms. Peace has been cast aside. British officers have been murdered when acting for the State; others engaged in a like employment have been thrown into captivity. Finally, the whole of the State and the whole Sikh people, joined by many of the Sardars in the Punjab, who signed the treaties, and by a member of the Regency itself, have arisen in arms against us and have waged a fierce and bloody war for the proclaimed purpose of destroying the British and their power....

1. Trotter, L.J., *History of British Empire in India*, i, p. 126.



"The Government has no desire for conquest now, but it is bound in its duty to provide fully for its own security and to guard the interests of those committed to its charge." And, therefore, the Governor-General "hereby proclaims, that the kingdom of the Punjab is at an end."<sup>1</sup>

The criticism of the proclamation and of the British action is futile, when the facts speak for themselves. One of the Articles of the Treaty of Bhairawal said that the "maintenance of an administration, and protection of Maharaja Dalip Singh during the minority of his highness", was the duty of the Governor-General for which he was given plenary powers, and could occupy any fort for the purpose. The council of Regency, as declared by Lord Hardinge on 21 December 1846, was to be under a complete control of the Resident who could remove a member and appoint another. And in 1847, the Resident himself said : "On the whole the Durbar (The Council of Regency) gives me as much support as I reasonably expect." Further, on the arrival of the British Commander-in-Chief at Lahore, he was received by the Maharaja and the Chiefs with due hospitalities, the British regiments moving against the rebels were supplied from Lahore, and the Durbar also fired 12 guns to celebrate the victory of Multan, when that place fell before the British army.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Dalip Singh was a British ward, and the Lahore Durbar and the Punjab Government under complete control of the Resident. Under these circumstances, if any subordinate chief revolted against the Durbar, or if peace was destroyed in any part of the Punjab, it was the duty of the Governor-General to protect the Maharaja and restore order. But he did the reverse. When there was trouble the Maharaja was further victimised, and his state was annexed.

Dewan Mulraj in fact had not revolted for the first time. He and his father, Sawan Mal, had governed Multan for over thirty years, repeatedly defying the Lahore authority. If Mulraj did so once again, it was nothing strange and he should have been properly dealt with.

Nor was it correct to put too much weight on Sher Singh<sup>3</sup> having joined the rebellion. He did not do so willingly. In fact while the Multan outbreak took place in March 1848, the conduct of Sher Singh remained satisfactory even as late as September, as the Resident himself admitted. When he was sent to suppress the Multan rebellion, according to Edwards, an assistant to the Resident he worked with the best of intentions. And if he ultimately did join the rebellion, he was forced into it by the stiff negative reply to the

1. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, pp. 572-3.

2. Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*

3. A member of Regency.

marriage proposal and an aggressive attitude of Captain Abbot against his father. Rest of the members of the Regency, however, remained loyal, only 5 out of the 16 who signed the treaties joining the rebellion; while many like Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, Sardar Jhanda Singh, Colonel Bhup Singh, Sardar Fateh Singh, Colonel Bahadur Singh and Colonel Budh Singh rendered a very loyal service to the British.

Then the Multan outbreak too was unpremeditated. Mulraj in fact was childless, suffering from bad health and was unpopular with his men. The Resident himself admitted that he had "discharged almost all his regular troops, preparatory to resigning his government," and had "only five or six field guns" at the time of the outbreak. Under such a circumstance he could not be expected to have been planning a rebellion. The man who stabbed the British officers, had in fact been brooding over his own probable dismissal when many of his colleagues had met this fate; for this he blamed the British and out of his personal grievance he attacked these officers, while the opportunity was taken up by the general discontented mass of people who raised the standard of revolt. It was only a minor problem, which could have been solved immediately if the troops requested for had been sent with the siege guns. But instead of doing that, the excuse forwarded was that, weather being bad, the troops could not immediately be sent. The troops reached about five months after the Multan outbreak, and in the meanwhile the rebellion had spread far and wide.

Commenting on the excuse of the bad weather, Edward Lake wrote to Currie : "As for weather, nothing can be more agreeable and pleasant than it is now. The nights are really quite cold and the days are not disagreeable." And even if the weather was bad, wrote Edwards to Major Hodson on 24 May 1848: "Postpone a rebellion! Was ever such a thing heard of in any Government?" The fact is clear. If the action was delayed, it was done so studiedly. The British did want the rebellion to spread so as to take their chance.

Herbert Edward frankly wrote to Major Hodson, the Political Assistant to the Resident, on 24 May 1848 : "You express a hope in your letter that the British Government will act for itself, and not prop up a fallen dynasty. In other words you hope we shall seize the opportunity to annex the Punjab. In this I cannot agree with you....The treaty was made with the Sikh Government and people, it cannot be forfeited by the treachery of a Gorkha regiment in Multan, the rebellion of a discharged Sardar or the treasonable intrigues of the queen-mother, who has no connection with the Government of her son."<sup>1</sup>

1. Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, *Punjab Papers*, 1849. 590; Hunter, W.W., *Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 74,

The treacherous British designs are further manifest in the Governor-General's proclamations of 18 November 1848, and as late as of 5 February 1849, in which he said that the British forces entered the Punjab not "as an enemy to the constituted Government," while in his secret letter to the Resident as early as 3 October 1848, he wrote that he considered "the State of Lahore to be, to all intents and purposes, directly at war with the British Government."<sup>1</sup>

If such really was the British intention, it would be futile to call the arguments of the proclamation of annexation as unreasonable. The assertion of the proclamation that tribute was not paid, or loans were not repaid, was wrong. In fact the Durbar paid gold to the value of Rs 1,356,837 on 23 February 1848, and the Resident himself recorded, "They have thus, by economy and care, been able to make good four months' pay of the Irregular Cavalry, to discharge the whole of the arrears of the men who have been pensioned and disbanded, to meet their current expenses, and have still, at this moment, full eight lakh rupees in different treasuries to meet the public exigencies."<sup>2</sup> But even if the Durbar faltered somewhere, who was the person behind the Durbar? None but the Resident himself who controlled everything.

Nor need it be repeated that the treatment meted out to Maharani Jindan was too harsh. It cannot be gainsaid that the proclamation of annexation itself is confused and fails to clarify definitely who revolted in the Punjab against whom. At one place it says, "the Sikhs" have revolted, at another place "the Sikh nation" is mentioned, then the "State of Lahore" and the "Sikh people", as if all these are interconvertible terms. In fact when Gough arrived at Lahore, he himself was confused and wrote: "I do not know whether we are at peace or war, or who it is we are fighting for."<sup>3</sup>

Even if every chief revolted in the Punjab, so long as the British ward, Dalip Singh did not do so, it was their duty to protect him. Then again, even if all this happened, there was no need of annexing the Punjab. In Europe, when Napoleon was defeated by England and her allies, France was not annexed. In the Anglo-Nepalese War, Nepal was finally defeated in 1816, and a British Resident was imposed on that country. And this system continued. Patiala, Nabha, Jind and other Sikh States were taken under the British protection. Why could not one of the above examples be followed in the case of Dalip Singh's kingdom.

On 29 March Dalip Singh signed the proclamation of annexation

1. Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 262; *Punjab Papers*, 1848, p. 591.
2. *Punjab Papers*, 1849, p. 591.
3. *Life and Campaign of Hugh Viscount Gough*, II, p. 178.

as he was asked to do. An annual pension of £ 50,000 was fixed on him, and the last act of submission of the Maharaja was to surrender the *Kohinur*. Commenting on this, Ludlow wrote : "Fancy, if you can, a widow with the police. The police knock them on the head; walk into the house and kindly volunteer to protect the mistress against any violence on their part. A quarrel again breaks out, the truncheons are again successful, and the inspector now politely informs the lady that her house and the estate on which it stands are no longer her own, but will be retained in fee by the police : that on turning out she will receive an annuity equal to about one and six pence in a pound of her rental, and that she must hand over for the use of the Commissioner her best diamond necklace."<sup>1</sup>

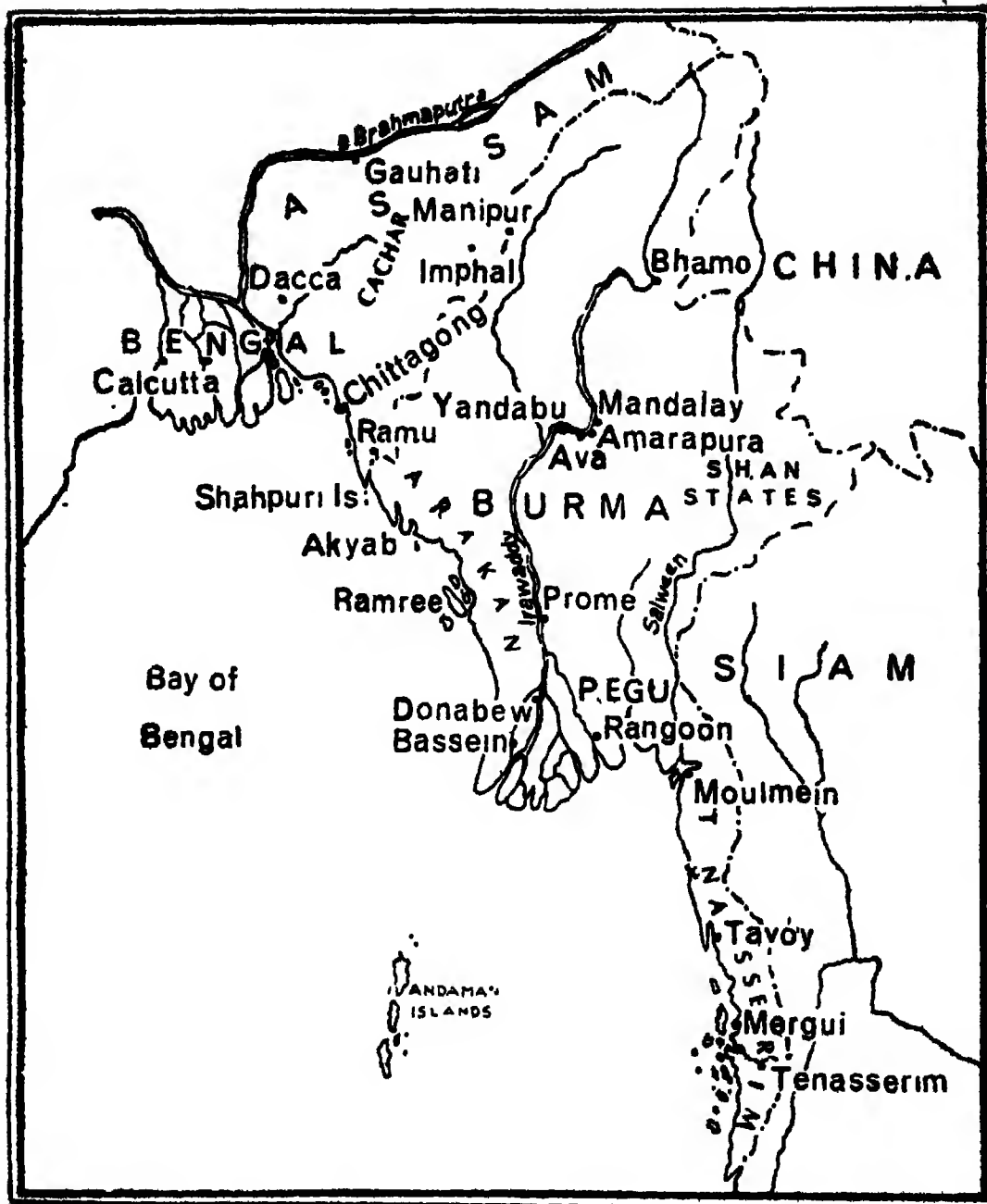
## THE SECOND BURMESE WAR

The First Burmese War had been fought during 1824-26. As a result of this, the Treaty of Yandaboo and a commercial agreement had been signed under which the British secured some commercial rights shrouded in ambiguous terms. Burma had accepted a British Resident at Ava at her own cost.

By the time of Dalhousie, besides the very much expected troubles, certain new developments took place towards this direction. The advance of America and France in the Eastern seas, and the possibility of Burma falling under their control or influence created a serious threat to the British interests on that side, and Dalhousie awaited an opportunity to forestall the trouble. Besides, as it was expected, as a result of the Yandaboo Treaty, a number of the British merchants had settled in Rangoon, who made high profits, and yet complained of ill-treatment and high taxes at the hands of the Burmese Government. Burmese on the other hand complained of high-handedness of these merchants and evasion of taxes. The commercial terms of the agreement of 1826 being very much ambiguous, it caused confusion and each of the parties distorted the terms to suit its own interests.

And then, the British Resident at Ava had been withdrawn since long, and the British relations with Burma at the time were being conducted through British Commissioners at Tennasserim. There was a difference of opinion whether the British Resident had been turned out or whether he had withdrawn himself. It is, however, clear that the King Tharrawady of Burma who came to power after overthrowing his brother King Bagyidaw refused to recognise the Treaty of Yandaboo, because under the Burmese constitution all such treaties and agreements lapsed at the time of the accession of a new king unless he himself chose to confirm them. Secondly, the new king claimed that it was below his royal dignity to deal with a Resident.

1. Ludlow, *British India*, II, p. 166.



To illustrate the three Anglo-Burmese Wars

He asked a royal British ambassador to be appointed in Burma to look after the British interests and the conduct of relations.

The God-sent opportunity offered itself to Lord Dalhousie when the British merchants at Rangoon, submitted to him a lengthy petition, complaining of ill-treatment at the hands of the Burmese authorities. They cited in their petition the two instances of Sheppard and Lewis, both of whom had been fined by the Rangoon authorities; the former for having been accused of throwing overboard a Chittagong pilot, and the latter of murdering one of his lascars. On receipt of this petition, and without any reasonable investigation, Dalhousie declared that the Treaty of Yandaboo had been violated, and that the Burmese Government should make reparation for the acts of the Governor of Rangoon. And without wasting any time, Commodore Lambert was sent to Burma to negotiate, strangely enough, with three ships of war—'Fox', 'Prosperine' and 'Tennasserim'. Lambert was instructed to demand an open disgrace of the Governor of Rangoon, and a compensation of nine thousand rupees for the insult and inconvenience which Captain Sheppard and Lewis had been put to.

Lambert landed off Rangoon on 25 November 1851, and immediately sent a letter to Ava, demanding a reply within three weeks. The Burmese king was startled at these developments, and responded forthwith by sending an officer from his court to deal with the matter. He promised in his reply the withdrawal of the Governor of Rangoon, and agreed to inquire into the cases of injustice and pay due compensation where required.

The Governor of Rangoon was actually replaced by a new one, who had strict instructions to conduct the required inquiry. After taking charge of his office the new Governor offered to see Lambert any day the latter desired. But drunk in Dalhousie's ambition and pride, Lambert refused to compromise himself to the reassuring situation. Instead of going himself to negotiate with the Governor, he sent a deputation of some senior naval officers for the purpose. When these officers arrived at the Governor's residence, he was asleep, and they had to wait till he woke up. But the Governor on waking up discovered that the officers had insulted his dignity by riding into his compound. Moreover, as he alleged, they were all drunk and their behaviour towards his men was rude. He, therefore, refused to see any one of them except an interpreter. This, however, was too much for the officers to bear. And they returned boiling with rage.

On hearing his officers' account, Lambert acted promptly by breaking off all the negotiations. A state of blockade was declared, an immediate apology from the Governor was demanded and the payment of compensation required. To add to this, he seized a

Burmese Royal 'Yellow Ship', towed it up and down and violated also the Burmese prohibited waters. When the Governor of Rangoon refused to be provoked even by all this insulting behaviour of Lambert, the next morning the latter took a yet more provocative step, ordering the British ships of war to steam away with the 'Yellow Ship'. This was too disgraceful for the Burmese to bear. Their guns opened fire, Lambert replied with the roar of his own guns, and this proved to be the beginning of the Second Burmese War.

When the news reached Dalhousie, he sent an ultimatum to the Burmese King. This ultimatum which was to expire on 1 April 1852, demanded an apology for the action of the Governor of Rangoon, and compensation and an indemnity of £ 100,000. Before, however, the last date of the ultimatum expired, Dalhousie completing his arrangements, sent a British force under General Godwin to Burma. All this confused the Burmese, and they could act neither this way nor that. On 2 April Godwin threw himself against the Burmese. Martaban fell and shortly after Rangoon went the same way. Bassein was captured, and this established a full British control on the entire sea-coast of Pegu. Godwin moved on yet further and Prome was occupied on 9 October. Although some of the higher British authorities were in favour of marching ahead to Ava, Godwin desisted from it. Richard Cobden, a British M.P. remarked: "Everything yielded like a toy-work." The Burmese had "as fair a chance of success in contending against our steamers, rockets, detonating shells, and heavy ordnance, of which they were destitute, as one of their Pegu ponies would have had in running a race with a locomotive."<sup>1</sup>

In December 1852 Dalhousie proclaimed the annexation of Pegu. Having secured this coveted prize, he showed very little anxiousness to sign a peace treaty with Burma. Negotiations were carried for sometime, but they were soon broken off and peace was automatically said to have been restored.

The significance of the British gains in the Second Burmese War can scarcely be over-estimated. The annexation of Pegu rounded off the British sea-board and cut off the access of Independent Burma to the sea, thereby removing the possibility of any European or American power developing any interest in that country. Besides, as a result of this annexation, the rice and the teak trade of the East fell into the hands of the British. And last but not the least, Pegu added a rich province to the British Indian empire, thereby enriching her resources.<sup>2</sup>

1. Rahim, M.A., *Lord Dalhousie's Administration*, p. 107.

2. See Hunter, W.W. *Marquess of Dalhousie* (Rulers of India series), Indian reprint, 1961 pp. 82-3.



Shrouded in imperialistic design, Dalhousie's Second Burmese War hardly deserves any justification on the basis of reason or equity. It was, as Arnold wrote, "neither just in its origin nor marked by strict equity in its conduct or issue."<sup>1</sup> It was strange indeed for Dalhousie to have sent a Commodore to Burma when he wanted peace. His primary object in fact was to exclude any possibility of a foreign influence in Burma, and this could best be done as he did. Only an excuse was needed to acquire the object.

### THE DOCTRINE OF LAPSE

The policy of annexation, as already mentioned, was the most important feature of Dalhousie's Governor-Generalship in India, whether in war or in peace. This policy had been followed earlier too, but it reached its climax during his time. There were reasons for this. The great Industrial Revolution was taking place in England, and to feed her growing industries she needed greater and greater sources of raw material. Besides, for the unloading of her growing industrial produce, there was the need of developing new markets. And since many other European countries were already in competition, the best solution of the English problems was the consolidation of the territories already in her possession or influence. In India too the circumstances had now changed. The British were strong and supposed to be the paramount power, and so there was no need of ruling this country through its petty *rajās*. Nor was the administrative system of the Indian chiefs in consonance with that of the British. There were inherent contradictions between the two, and a perpetual source of anxiety and excitement to the British. The best solution of the problem to Dalhousie was the extinction of all these petty principalities, which could very easily be done through what was known as the policy of the 'Doctrine of Lapse'.

The policy of the 'Doctrine of Lapse' was not a new policy applied for the first time in the time of Dalhousie. The Court of Directors had already declared in 1834 that the permission of adoption on the failure of natural heirs "should be the exception and not the rule, and should never be granted but as a special mark of favour or approbation." In 1841 it was further resolved to "preserve in the one clear and direct course of abandoning no just and honourable accession of territory or revenue." It was, however, only in the time of Dalhousie that the policy reached its climax.

The policy of the 'Doctrine of Lapse,' as applied earlier and in the time of Dalhousie, was based on three fundamental principles. First that the British were a paramount power in India, second, that the adopted sons could inherit the dependent states only with the sanction of the paramount power, and third that the paramount power could withhold such a sanction, as it had the right and the power to do so.

1. Arnold, Edwin, *Marquess of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*, 2 vols., II p. 273.



By way of criticism one may say that so far as the first principle of the British paramountcy is concerned, the only justification for this was that the British in India were the strongest power, and hence they were paramount—a justification based on might rather than on logic. All the rights that the British possessed in India, they did so either by right of conquest, or of grants, or by treaties. And a student of political science knows that none of these modes ever fetch a right of suzerainty. Till as late as 1813, the Governor-General claimed on the English Company's seal no better right than to be the servant of the Emperor of India. And the Company's coins, as late as till 1835, conveyed their subservience to the Indian Emperor, the image of the English monarch appearing on the rupee only in that year. Nor could the paramountcy of the Mughals be said to have rolled down on the British. For the Mughals had ceased to be paramount since long, and except when the British wanted to serve their own ends, they never recognised the Mughals to be so. Moreover, India since long had been a congeries of states, with each one of which the British had a different type of relationship. Some of these states claimed to be as much paramount as the Mughals could be, or as, now in the days of their power and glory, the British claimed to be. Obviously therefore the claims of the British being a paramount power in India were fallacious and without foundation.

Again, so far as the second principle was concerned, it was only as much reasonable and justifiable as the first was. The principle was that the 'dependent' states could not pass to the 'adopted sons' without the British sanction. And in this the very word 'dependent' was full of misconception and confusion. For the purpose of the application of this principle a distinction was drawn between 'independent', 'allied' and the 'subordinate' states and it was supposed the policy of Dalhousie applied only to the last. But here everything was misleading. In the existing circumstances there was in fact no independent state in India as Spain or Portugal or England in Europe. And the distinction between a 'subordinate' and an 'allied' state, and between a 'subordinate' and a 'dependent' state too led but only to confusion. In the case of Karuali for instance, which was an ancient Rajput state and was annexed by Dalhousie, the Directors considered it as a 'protected ally', while Dalhousie called it a 'subordinate' state, and thus subject to the Doctrine of Lapse. When the two words, 'dependent' and 'subordinate' caused a further confusion, Dalhousie sought to clarify it by saying that the policy applied to those states which were the "virtual creations of the British Government or from their former position stood in such relation to that Government as to give to it the recognised right of the paramount power in all questions of the adoption of an heir to the sovereignty of the state." Now in this assertion the proposition of "former position" is ambiguous, while it would be absolutely wrong to say that the British virtually created any state in India.

There is no doubt that the British did recognise by treaties the existence of certain states without or after a war. But this would bring about a new creation as much as that of the world seen for the first time by a blind man recently come to light.

Moreover, the right to sanction the adoption of a son, as involved in the second principle, was also incorrect and hence unjustifiable. Amongst the Hindus, a son is adopted not only for the inheritance of property, but also, and mainly, for the spiritual benefit that it brings to the deceased. For a Hindu who has no son, the adoption of one is a spiritual and religious necessity, and no mere political incidence. Under these circumstances, therefore, it is utterly difficult to understand as to how and under what circumstances the right to sanction such an adoption should have been acquired by the Company.

Then the third principle that the Company could withhold the sanction for adoption too does not stand the test of history or reason. The Mughals did possess this right, but under the peculiar set up of the Hindu society and in their relation with the Hindu princes, they never refused such sanction. Obviously, therefore, the right might have been possessed by them under some Muslim law, but it had no recognition amongst the Hindus. In the beginning the British too fell in line with the Mughals. It was only in 1831 that a distinct change was brought about when the Bombay government decided to refuse such sanction where circumstances so commanded, and this policy was later on adopted by the Directors in their despatch in 1834 which has already been quoted above. From now onwards it began to be definitely believed that the right to recognise an adoption also carried with it the right to refuse its sanction. This redundant policy slowly acquired strength, till in the time of Dalhousie it reached a climax when he annexed Satara, Jaitpur, Sambhalpur, Bhagat, Udaipur, Jhansi and Nagpur.

*Satara.* This state lay across the main lines of communication between Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, and being the seat of the descendants of Shivaji, it commanded a special veneration of the Marathas. The Raja of Satara Shahji Maharaj died in 1848, and just before that he adopted a son named Venkatrao to succeed him. Dalhousie, considering the state to be the "virtual creation of the British," and "dependent" upon them, declared the adoption illegal, because, he said, no sanction of the Government had been obtained. The Court of Directors approved of it, and the State was annexed.

Now as regards the justification of this step, neither of the claims that it was the "virtual creation of the British" or that it was "dependent" stands the test of logic. The first claim was wrong because

the state existed much before the British assumed paramountcy. The Raja of Satara had been the overlord of the Peshwas, though later, the Peshwas usurped power, and his position was eclipsed. Despite his weakness however he continued enjoying the veneration of the Marathas who considered him the descendant of their great hero Shivaji, and attached their sentimental affiliation to him. It was to reconcile the Maratha families that Hastings in 1819 signed a treaty with the Satara ruler Pratap Singh who was dethroned in 1839, and succeeded by Shahji Maharaj.

Nor could it with any reasonable justification be asserted that the state was a 'dependent' state. The British Government clearly proclaimed in 1818 that "the Raja of Satara who is now a prisoner in Baji Rao's hands will be released and placed at the head of an independent sovereignty" And it was expressly mentioned that the treaty signed in 1819 between the British and the Raja was a contract between two equals, and binding upon them in 'perpetuities'. The single word 'perpetuities' coupled with "independent sovereignty" as mentioned above is significant enough to explode Dalhousie's theories. There was in fact no justification for the annexation of Satara except the one that it suited Dalhousie's imperialistic convenience. Arnold sums up the arguments by saying that Satara to Dalhousie, was "a rich but not a lawful prize."<sup>1</sup>

*Berar.* Berar, which had rich cotton fields to feed the industries at Manchester, and which was a part of the territories of the Nizam of Hyderabad, had been a coveted prize for the British since long. It was annexed by Dalhousie in 1853 in lieu of the debt which the Nizam had allegedly acquired for the maintenance of a British contingent which was supposed to be for his safety. This annexation was as much justifiable as any other such action of Dalhousie.

The subject needs no detailed discussion. The Nizam had already been under the obligation of keeping a subsidiary force under the Treaty of 1800. And there was little justification in forcing him to keep yet another contingent supposed to be for his safety, which he did not require. This contingent too was to be kept by the Nizam in perpetuity at his own expense. There might originally have been a reason for this which had however vanished since long, and there was no legal force under which the Nizam could be compelled to continue bearing this burden. In a private interview with the Resident, Low, the Nizam enquired in abject humility on 12 March 1853, that, since the contingent had originally been organised against the Peshwa, and the latter had long been defeated, then "why was the contingent kept up any longer than the war?" The Resident's reply to this question was remarkably naive and interesting. He demanded of the Nizam why the latter

1. Arnold, *op. cit.*, II, p. 285.

wanted an explanation of something that happened 36 years earlier and specially "when I was not in this part of India at that time?" The Nizam was reminded of Dalhousie's letter to him dated 6 June 1851 in which it had been sustained by the British Government "whose resentment it is dangerous to provoke," and "whose resentment can crush you at its will."<sup>1</sup> Nizam's timidity had indeed led him to this trouble. He could not pay the expense, the debt had grown to £ 780,000, and he began to be threatened with that very contingent which was supposed to be for his safety.

There was no safe alternative for the Nizam but to give in to the British demand. In 1853 a new agreement was signed which was illogically called a treaty. Illogical, because it had been signed by the Nizam under duress. Under the new treaty the Nizam had to surrender the territory of Berar to the British, yielding the gross revenue of fifty lakh rupees per annum. The terms of the treaty were that out of this revenue the old debts of the Nizam would be discharged, the British contingent would be paid for, and later on if there was a surplus, which the British authorities alone could determine, it would be paid to the treasury of the Nizam. Such was the treatment meted out to the Nizam who was supposed to have been very loyal and faithful to the English East India Company.

*Jhansi.* The acquisition of Berar did not fall in the category of lapses. But the annexation of Jhansi did. The territories of Jhansi had been ceded by Peshwa to the English Company in 1817, after which Hastings placed Rao Ramchandra on the throne of Jhansi, signing with him a treaty, the second article of which clearly mentioned that the house of Rao Ramchandra was granted the right of succession in perpetuity, through a direct heir, a collateral, or a nominated successor.

Rao Ramchandra ruled the state till 1835 when he died issueless, but having adopted a son to whom the British did not give their recognition. The British recognised Raghunath Rao who was an uncle of the deceased, instead, as the successor. Raghunath Rao ruled till 1838 when after his death his brother Gangadhar Rao succeeded. The latter died issueless in 1853. But he, before his death, had adopted Anand Rao, with his widow Laxmibai as Regent, by the prescribed ceremonies as his successor, though the intimation to this effect could be sent to the British only later on.

Without any reasonable enquiry or a just consideration Dalhousie declared the state lapsed, forwarding the argument that the "dependent nature of Jhansi does not admit of dispute." It is quite obvious from the above account that in this action Dalhousie neither gave any consideration to the second article of the Treaty of 1817, nor did he attach any weight to the precedents of succession as established between 1817 and 1853. Laxmi bai, who according to

1. Rahim, M.A., *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 189.

Malcolm, the Political Agent "bears a very high character and is much respected by every one at Jhansi,"<sup>1</sup> became one of the storm-centres during the mutiny in 1857.

*Nagpur.* Nagpur like Satara also lay across the lines of communication between Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. Berar the, rich cotton fields, had already been annexed by the British, but it was supposed to be a dominion without an approach. The approach lay through Nagpur, and therefore the British interest in this territory was obvious.

Raghuji the ruler of Nagpur died in 1853, not having left a son, or having adopted one to succeed. Before, he died however, he had made repeated requests to the British for permission to adopt his successor, not taking the step himself lest it should be held invalid. Leaving aside the permission, even the consideration of the subject was delayed till the chief died full of apprehensions as to what would happen to his principality. At his deathbed, however, he directed his *Rani* to adopt a son, and expressed preference for Yashwant Rao the nearest collateral who also took the place of his son at the funeral pyre.

Now, the precedents of widows adopting sons were not wanting. Such a permission was accorded to a widow by the Hindu law, and already there had been instances where the British had given their approval to the custom. The widow of Jankoji Sindhia had adopted a son in 1836. Similarly the adoption by the widow of Kishengarh in 1841 was accorded recognition by the British.

But in the case of Nagpur we do not understand what considerations weighed with Dalhousie in refusing recognition. The widow of Raghuji adopted Yashwant Rao duly, though the relevant ceremonies were deferred partly due to the Darbar being in state of mourning and partly for the purpose of getting the formal British permission.

When the mourning was over, the *Rani* requested the Resident for permission to perform the necessary ceremonies. But Dalhousie not being in a mood to listen to such requests, declared : "The Raja has died and has deliberately abstained from adopting an heir. His widow has adopted no successor. The state of Nagpur conferred by the British Government in 1818 on the Raja and his heirs has reverted to the British Government on the death of the ruler without any heir. Justice, custom and precedent, leave the Government wholly unfettered to decide as it thinks best." The repeated requests of the Raja and the request of the widow were kept secret, and both were shown to have been wise enough to have handed over the

1. Rahim, M.A., *op. cit.*, p. 213.

state to the better administration of the British. The Resident pounced upon the unfortunate claimants, put his seal on the state treasury, and even the household stores were thus taken under control. The state was declared to have lapsed.<sup>1</sup>

The logic of Dalhousie thus stands no test of reason and morality. Firstly the requests for adoption had been repeatedly made; and secondly, even without any adoption, by the law of the East as well as that of the West, Yashwant Rao was the lawful heir to the deceased chief. Even Lee-Warner, an apologist of Lord Dalhousie, could not help condemning Dalhousie for this action.<sup>2</sup>

*Anglo-Oudh Relations.* Oudh, a land of immense resources and fertility, though not of much strategic value after the establishment of the Company's rule, had been a coveted prize to the British for long. Right from the beginning of the British relations with this state the British had tried to strengthen their hold on it, slowly but surely, taking advantage of the death of every Nawab and putting up for the throne their own favourite from whom to wrest whatever prize they wished, till finally it was sucked dry, to be annexed in the time of Dalhousie in 1856. The past history of Oudh till its annexation makes an interesting story of the British cunningness, and an aggressive victimisation of the weak and innocent.

It was in 1773 that the Nawab of Oudh asked for the first time for the British help in his conquest of Rohilkhand; promising to bear their expenses of war and to pay Rs 50 lakhs in addition. This military aid first offered in an irregular and desultory manner, evolved in a short time into a regular policy. Treaties were signed and Oudh was provided with a regular force for her internal as well as external protection in return for a heavy subsidy. Having thus got freedom from worries against internal commotions and external invasions, the Nawab became careless and irresponsible in his duties towards his subjects. His extravagance increased, which coupled with the heavy subsidy that he had to pay, involved him into arrears of payment to the Company. Warren Hastings pressed the Nawab for money and forced him to extort it with the British help from his mother and grandmother who lived in Fyzabad. The British troops were sent to the place of these ladies' residence, and "their eunuchs were compelled by imprisonment, starvation and threat, if not actual infliction of flogging, to surrender the treasure in December 1782."<sup>3</sup>

1. See for further details Lee-Warner, *The Life of Marquess of Dalhousie* in two vols; Prasad, S.N., *Paramourtry under Dalhousie*; Rahim M.A., *Lord Dalhousie's Administration of the Conquered and Annexed States*, pp. 223-24.
2. See Lee-Warner, *The Life of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, and Lee-Warner, *The Protected Princes of India*, for further details.
3. Majumdar and others, *Advanced History of India*, p. 696.

The condition of the people of Oudh during this time was not such as could be envied. They suffered under the hands of the corrupt revenue officers who extorted money on every pretext. If they revolted, the British subsidiary troops were there to crush them to submission. Sometimes the revenue of a whole district would be farmed out to an Englishman, in which case an actual martial law was imposed upon the people. "It is said that fathers sold their children to meet the demands of revenue, defaulters were confined in open cages, and masses of people left their fields before flying troops in pursuit of them."<sup>1</sup>

As already mentioned, the British took advantage of the death of every Nawab and obtained more and better terms from a successor. In 1797, for instance, Asaf-ud-Daula died, and the British first set up and then set aside Wazir Ali, not an incapable man, in favour of Sadat Ali. A new treaty was entered into with the new Nawab, under which he agreed to pay a higher subsidy, ceded to the British the fort of Allahabad and bound himself not to hold communication with any foreign state, nor permit any European other than the English to settle in his country. Wellesley increased the subsidiary troops in Oudh, involving an additional expense for the Nawab of fifty lakh rupees. The Nawab not being able to bear the additional burden, had to surrender Rohilkhand and the Lower Doab in lieu of that. He also agreed to work under the advice of a British Resident.

Under such conditions the administration of the country could hardly but be of the loosest and the most corrupt type. Murders of the most heinous type were committed, and there were no courts of justice working properly to deal with them. The peasants were squeezed of their earning of sweat and blood, while the Nawabs, fearless of uprisings, revelled in the *zenana*. Kaye writes : "The rulers of Oudh, whether Wuzeers or kings, had not the energy to be tyrants. They simply allowed things to take their course. Sunk in voluptuousness and pollution, often too horribly revolting to be described, they gave themselves up to guidance of panders and parasites, and cared not so long as these wretched creatures administered to their sensual appetites." Oudh suffered under the curse of a dual government, the Nawab's and the Company's and under "such influences," we may quote Kaye again, "it is not strange that disorder of every kind ran riot over the whole length and breadth of the land."<sup>2</sup>

The British instead of understanding the contribution they themselves made in the mismanagement of the government in Oudh, put the whole blame on the Nawab, and Wellesley professing to be a

1. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny*, pp. 9-10; also see Ahmad Saffi, *British Aggression in Oudh*,
2. Kaye, Sir John, *Administration of the East India Company*, p. 242.



well-wisher of the people of this land, declared that "no effectual security can be provided against the ruin of the Province of Oudh," except by assumption of the civil as well as military government by the British themselves.

The Nawab was to work under the advice of the British Resident, and he did so quite faithfully. Under these conditions it is difficult to understand how the Nawab alone could be blamed for mismanagement of the Oudh affairs. Yet this was the excuse which hung on the head of the Nawab.

After Wellesley, Lord Hastings and Amherst had nothing to complain against the Nawab so far as his loyalty to the British was concerned. Lord Hastings was rather so much pleased with the Nawab for advancing loans to the Company in the Nepalese and the Burmese wars that he saddled him with the title of king. When, however, these wars emptied the treasuries of the British despite the Nawab's loans, and as the resources of Oudh promised to replenish them, misrule in that country was discovered by Lord Bentinck again. He declared angelically that if the Nawab did not manage his affairs properly, "for the prosperity of the people, the entire management of the country would be assumed by the Company, and the king would be transmuted into a state prisoner."

The reason of annexing the state for the prosperity of its people, however, having no legal force behind it, Lord Auckland sought to remedy the situation in 1837. In that year Nasir-ud-din, the Nawab of Oudh, died. The dowager queen set up a son on the throne who was not recognised by Auckland who set up Muhammad Ali Saheb instead, from whom a new treaty was extracted in September.

Under the terms of the new treaty, Oudh was saddled with an auxiliary force to be maintained at the expense of sixteen lakh rupees. The Company also secured the much needed right to assume the management of the state in case of gross misrule. It was a strange treaty which could be justified under the law of the strongest alone. Thank God, however, the treaty was disallowed by the Court of Directors who instructed Lord Auckland to convey the fact to the Nawab immediately. Auckland, however, deceived his masters in letting them understand that their order had been carried out. In fact, it was kept a secret and the Nawab was only informed that he had been absolved of the responsibility of paying for the auxiliary force, he being permitted to retain the belief that rest of the terms of the treaty were still in force.

The situation continued like this till later on the Court of Directors discovered the facts and concurred with it. The treaty also found its place in the government records, and we find it referred to in Sir Henry Lawrence's *Essay on Oudh* written in 1844. In 1847



Lord Hardinge repeated the warning against misrule in Oudh and made a clear reference to the treaty, which is important.

Dalhousie, as we know, came as the Governor-General of India in 1848. In 1849 Sleeman, a rank annexationist, was appointed as the Resident in Oudh. Dalhousie instructed him to prepare a report on the affairs of Oudh, which he did painting the blackest picture of the situation. A list of some irresponsible traitors in Oudh was also appended to the report, who supported the idea of the British take-over of the administration. This report was published in 1851. In 1854 Colonel Outram succeeded Sleeman as the Resident in Oudh, and submitted a new report on the affairs giving no better treatment to the facts.

With the above material in hand, Dalhousie prepared a minute on Oudh in which he suggested that due to misrule in the state its administration should be vested in the Company, permitting the king to retain his title as a reward for his consistent loyalty. He further suggested that if the king did not concur with this arrangement, the Treaty of 1801 should be cancelled, and he be left to his own fate. The Council of Dalhousie, however, was divided on the issue, the majority being against the abrogation of the Treaty of 1801. The things continued in this way till the Home authorities rescued the situation by rejecting Dalhousie's proposal and ordering him to annex the state instead. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was forced to abdicate, and the annexation of his state was proclaimed by Dalhousie on 13 February 1856 when he declared that "the British Government would be guilty in the sight of God and man, if it were any longer to aid in sustaining by its countenance an administration fraught with suffering to millions."<sup>1</sup> Thus ends the story of Oudh as an independent or a semi-independent state.

Dalhousie, in fact, had been looking at Oudh avariciously since long. On 18 September 1848 he wrote to a friend : "I have got two other kingdoms on hand to dispose of—Oudh and Hyderabad. Both are on the highboard to be taken under our management." Again, on some other dates : "Oudh is a cherry which will drop into our mouths some day." He was not sure if "the court would approve of my shaking the tree to help it down." "I can not find a pretext for doing it without sanction." He viewed with pleasure the report of Outram who "has brought together a tremendous bill of indictment." After Dalhousie sent his report and recommendations fabricated on the basis of the reports of Sleeman and Outram to the Directors, he wrote to a friend on 12 May 1855 : "Such a case has gone to them as they cannot resist." "The King won't offend or quarrel with us," he wrote on 2 May 1855, "and will take any

1. See Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

amount of kicking without being rebellious."<sup>1</sup>

A "gross breach of national faith," writes P.E. Roberts, for which however, "home authorities, and not Lord Dalhousie were responsible."<sup>2</sup> That the fact of annexation can stand no test of logic or reason, is very much clear from the foregoing account itself. The claim, that the action was taken for the good of the people who were dissatisfied with the administration of the Nawab, is itself contradicted by the fact that it were these very people who took an active part against the British in the mutiny of 1857. And even if it be correct that they were dissatisfied with the government of their Nawabs, rather than that exercised by the growing British influence, it could under no moral standard justify a foreign power taking over that administration.

Nor would it be correct to assume that the administration of Oudh after its annexation became what could justifiably be envied. The manner in which the administration was taken over was nothing but brutal. Kaye writes : "It was charged against us that our officers had turned the stately palaces of Lucknow into stalls and kennels, the delicate women, the daughters or the companions of kings, had been sent adrift, homeless, and helpless, that treasure houses had been violently broken open and despoiled, that the private property of the royal family had been sent to the hammer, and that other vile things had been done, very humiliating to the king's people, but far more disgraceful to our own."<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the annexation, there were a large number of persons living on the court bounties who were sent adrift. Though such contingencies were provided for, they failed to be supplied. Out of the 60,000 sepoys of Oudh, only 1/4th were retained, the rest being sent to roam about in the streets. The high rates of assessment imposed after the annexation alienated the cultivators, while the introduction of the direct revenue arrangement with the village proprietors sent the Talukdars crying that the old order be restored. Heavy tax was imposed on opium, "prices of other necessities raised, by contract system, if not by direct imposts," writes Kaye. The "new judicial regulations, with their increased formalities and delays, and expenses, were causing scarcely less uneasiness and scarcely less popular dislike of the new Government."<sup>4</sup> The net result of the annexation, in short, was the alienation of all the classes which made the ground wet, ready for the mutineers in 1857 to work their hands upon.

1. Baird, J.G.A., *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, London, 1911, quoted by Rahim, M.A. *op. cit.*, pp. 315, 317.
2. Roberts, P.E., *History of British India*, p. 362.
3. Kaye and Malleon, *History of the Indian Mutiny* (6 vols.), I, p. 232.
4. Kaye, *op. cit.*, I, p. 233.

*The abolition of pensions and titles.* Besides the annexation of territories and states, Dalhousie annexed several titles and pensions as well. The argument was that these were personal, and therefore lapsed after the death of their holders under the 'Doctrine of Lapse.'

*Dhondu Pant Nana Saheb.* One of the most important cases of the lapse of pensions thus was that of Dhondu Pant Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Baji Rao II, the Peshwa. Baji Rao II had been granted a pension of eight lakh rupees a year and the city of Bithur near Kanpur after his surrender to the British in the Third Maratha War in 1819 when the office of the Peshwa was abolished. Baji Rao died in 1852 issueless, but leaving behind an adopted son Dhondu Pant Nana Saheb to succeed to his privileges. This adoption for the pension, however, was declared invalid by Dalhousie. Nana Sahib tried in vain to appeal to the good sense of the British, but met only as Sir John Kaye terms it, a "harsh" and grasping treatment. Disgusted and insulted, Nana had to raise a standard of revolt against the British.

*The Nawab of Carnatic.* Another victim of the 'Doctrine of Lapse' in this category was Azimjah, the successor of the Nawab of Carnatic, Mohamad Ghaus, who died in October 1855 without leaving any issue. Judged from any standard Azimjah was the rightful successor to his privileges, for which he applied to the Governor of Madras, Lord Harris. The latter, however, wrote to Lord Dalhousie that the titles and pensions should be regarded as strictly personal, and that "the semblance of royalty without power is mockery of authority which must be pernicious—that it is impolitic and unwise to allow pageant, to continue which, though it has been politically harmless, may at any time become a nucleus for sedition and agitation." Dalhousie concurred with this view and declaring that the Treaty of 1801 was only personal, conferring no hereditary rights on the Nawab, announced his privileges to have lapsed.

Dalhousie's action in respect of the Nawab of Carnatic has been a subject of criticism, just as that in respect of Nana Saheb. Under the strict technical considerations the English position in Carnatic had been only that of feudatories to the Nawab. Whatever rights they originally possessed in that state, were based on grants made by the Nawab. Later on, however, taking recourse to diplomacy and treachery, and taking full advantage of the weakness of the successive Nawabs, the English developed their hold. Cornwallis signed a new treaty with the Nawab under which his administrative powers were very considerably reduced. In place of the rightful claimant Ali, Wellesley supported Azim-ud-daula for the throne of Carnatic, and thus wrested from him a new treaty in 1801. Under the new treaty, 4/5th of the revenues of Carnatic were conferred in

perpetuity on the Company, while 1/5th were to go to the Nawab, as it was expressly laid down that "it is the intention of the contracting parties that the said sums shall be considered to be permanent deductions in *all times to come* from the revenues of Karnatik." This treaty was declared by Dalhousie to have conferred only personal rights and not hereditary ones. It was strange indeed ! Till the time of Dalhousie at least these arrangements had never been considered personal by any Governor-General.

In the official papers a reference had already been made to Azimjah as the rightful heir of the Nawab. And when called upon to explain this, Dalhousie argued without any compunction that this reference was only to a possibility, and not to certainty; and that the indication of a possibility in no way implied recognition of the succession.

*The Tanjore Raja.* Shivaji, the Rajah of Tanjore died in 1855, leaving behind a widow and two daughters. The Raja had been enjoying a pension and some jagir from which his widow was shamelessly excluded. She was not permitted to keep even the private property of her husband. For all this a reference was made neither to any past precedent nor to some agreement under which the action could be justified.

It would be useless to go on forwarding arguments that Dalhousie's policy towards the title and pension holders was absolutely unreasonable and aggressive. The case of the widow of the Rajah of Tanjore was as much touching as any other such case. In the house of Tanjore the females had never been excluded from inheritance. For instance, Soojnabai had inherited after the death of the fifth Maharaja of the state, and absolutely no objection was attached to this action. In the present case too the widow filed a in the Supreme Court at Madras and secured a decree in her favour. The Company, however, filed an appeal before the Privy Council which reversed the decree not on merit, but on the question of jurisdiction, declaring that it was "an act of State and hence no municipal court had jurisdiction." But even then, Lord Kingston who delivered the judgement, could not help declaring : "It is extremely difficult to discover in these papers any grant of legal right on the part of the East India Company...to the possession of this Raj, or of any part of the property of the Raja on his death." The arguments forwarded were that the "Raja was an independent sovereign of territories undoubtedly minute and bound by treaties to a powerful neighbour, which left him, practically, little power of free action, but he did not hold his territory such as it was, as a fief of the British Crown, or of the East India Company...." And secondly, that there could be absolutely no pretence for the Company to claim these possessions "on the death of the Raja without a son,

by any legal title, either as an escheat or as *Bona Vacantia*." Dalhousie's action in regard to this, was thus undoubtedly devoid of every logic.

### CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The most important constitutional measure adopted in the time of Dalhousie was the Charter Act of 1853 which, according to some observers, marks the beginning of the Parliamentary system in India. Another measure was the Government of India Act, 1854. The Charter Act deserves separate consideration.

#### The Charter Act of 1853

Another twenty years had passed since the passage of the Charter Act of 1833, and now the Charter of the East India Company had to be renewed, if the Company was to continue. The circumstances of the new Charter Act of 1853, the last of the series of such enactments, may briefly be examined to enable us to understand the provisions.

The increasing interest of the British Parliament in the Indian affairs developed an increasing desire to have its hold on India, which necessitated further curtailment of the powers of the Directors. Their power of patronage had been reduced by a provision in the Charter Act of 1833, but this provision was shortly after amended in 1834 permitting the Directors to continue their patronage. Section 87 of the Act of 1833 was not put properly into effect. The Section had promised non-discrimination in the appointments to the Company's services, but the Indian student, travelled to England incurring an enormous expense and qualified for services in vain. For, the amendment of 1834 enabled the Directors to continue their old recruitment practices, and thus defeat the purpose of the Section. Cameron, the Chairman of the Indian Law Commission, frankly admitted that "during the last twenty years not a single native has been appointed to any office except such as were eligible before the Statute." The need for doing something towards the realisation of the objective of Section 87 was felt, because an increasing number of Indians were receiving Western education, and their aspirations for government posts had to be satisfied if they were to be saved from discontentment.

There was also an ever growing demand that the double government at Home should be abolished; as the Court of Directors had lived their purpose, and this institution coupled with the authority of the Board of Control made the handling of the Indian problems only more difficult, involving unnecessary delay and expenditure. An application to this effect was actually received from the Indian Presidencies which demanded the appointment of a Secretary of State with an Indian Council to handle the business.

Nor was the legislative body for India adequate and competent. The legislative powers of the Presidencies had been taken over and given to the Centre by the Act of 1833; but ill-understanding the magnitude of the problem, a mere law member in the Governor-General's Council was supposed to be sufficient to handle the matter. Nor were the Presidencies offered an effective opportunity to give their requirements to the Centre in this respect. Certain steps to remedy this situation were also necessary. Voice was also raised against the Governor-General of India remaining also the Governor of Bengal. So long as this continued, the Governor-General could not be expected to remain free from bias in favour of that province.

Besides great territorial and political changes had taken place since 1833. The first Afghan War had been fought, Sind and Punjab had been annexed. Several Indian States, besides Pegu in Burma, had fallen victims to Lord Dalhousie's policy of annexations. The newly acquired territories required to be constitutionally provided for. Then there was demand for the decentralisation of powers, and for giving the Indians a hold on their own internal affairs, for which some support existed in England as well. Lord Derby for instance declared in the House of Commons on 2 April 1852: "This is your bounden duty in the interests of humanity, of benevolence, and of morality and religion, that as fast as you can do it safely, wisely and prudently, the inhabitants of India should be gradually entrusted with more and more of the superintendence of their own internal affairs."

*Provisions.* These thus were the circumstances under which the opportunity for the renewal of the charter came. The Parliament appointed two committees in 1852 to enquire into the matter and on the basis of their reports the Charter Act of 1853 was shaped. Concerning the affairs in England the Company was granted to hold the revenue and territories of India, "in trust for her Majesty, her heirs and successors," not for 20 years this time, but "until Parliament shall otherwise provide." At the same time the Act provided that the salaries of the members of the Board of Control, Secretary and the other officers would be fixed by Her Majesty's Government, but would be paid by the Company. The salary of the President of the Board, it was further provided, would not be less than that of any principal Secretary of State. The number of the Court of Directors was reduced from 24 to 18, and 6 of these were to be nominated by the Crown. Their quorum was fixed at ten, so that when the meetings of the Court were thinly attended, the nominees of the Crown were enabled to have a majority. The Court of Directors were dispossessed of their powers of patronage. The services were thrown open to competition, in which no discrimination of religion, caste or creed was to be made. A committee was appointed in 1854 to enforce this scheme and Macaulay was appointed its chairman. To manage the newly acquired territories in India, the Court of Directors were empowered to constitute a new Presidency, or to alter

the boundaries of the existing ones. This enabled the Punjab to be created into a separate Lieutenant-Governorship. The Act also empowered the Crown to appoint a Law Commission in England, which was to examine the reports and drafts of the Indian Law Commission which had now ceased to exist, and recommend legislative measures on that basis.

In India the Act carried the separation of the legislative from the executive functions a step further. The Law Member was made full member of the Governor-General's Executive Council. And this Council, while sitting in its legislative capacity, was to consist besides the Governor-General, the Commander-in-Chief and the four executive members; of six additional members who could be called Legislative Councillors. The additional members were to consist of the Chief Justice; a puisne judge and four representatives from the provinces of Bengal, Madras, Bombay and North-Western Provinces. The provincial representatives were to be civil servants of the Company of no less than ten year's standing. The Governor-General was empowered to appoint two more civil servants to the Council, though this power was never actually exercised. The quorum of the Legislative Council was fixed at seven. The Governor-General's consent was necessary for all legislative proposals. The Governor-General had the powers to nominate a Vice-President of this Council, and the procedure of the Council was to be like that of the Parliament. Questions could be asked and the policy of the Executive Government could be discussed, though the Executive Council had the power to veto a bill of the Legislative Council. The different legislative measures were to be entrusted to the Select Committees for examination, and the discussions of measures already begun were thrown open to public. The Act fixed the salaries of the provincial representatives at £ 5,000 a year.

Another significant provision as already referred to, was the throwing open of the covenanted civil services to competition to all natural born subjects of Her Majesty. "There would therefore be no obstacle for transfer of the Indian territories to the Crown when Parliament, in the natural course of things, would come to consider the matter in 1873. The Mutiny only accelerated this process."<sup>1</sup>

A separate governor was to be appointed for Bengal. The provinces secured a representation in the Central Legislative Council, and it was clearly laid down that no measure concerning a province would be discussed unless the representative of that province was present.

*The Importance.* The Charter Act of 1853 thus brought about a significant improvement in the existing constitution. No definite period was fixed for the Company's rule in India, and therefore the crown

1. Punniiah, KV., *op. cit.*, p. 59.



could take over the administration at any time. The position and prestige of the President of the Board of Control were enhanced. Regarding emoluments, he was to enjoy a status equal to that of any Principal Secretary of State and therefore his office now became one of the most coveted offices of the Government. The already dwindling powers of the Court of Directors received a blow. Their number was reduced to 18, 6 of whom were to be nominated by the Crown. To these six posts, the Crown always appointed the retired and experienced Civil Servants of the Company, thus bringing their first-hand knowledge of the Indian affairs to bear on it. The more significant step, however, was the taking away of the Directors' patronage, and throwing open of the Civil Services to an open competition. This opened on the one hand a way to the satisfaction of the aspirations of the educated Indians, and on the other hand a way to more efficient administration of the country—for now 'ability' to compete and no mere 'nepotism' was the password.

Nor was the establishment of the principle of legislative power separate from the executive less significant. Legislation in this Act, commented the Montford report, "was, for the first time, treated as a special function of the government requiring special machinery and special process." Under this act, as Cowell remarked, "Discussion became oral instead of in writing; bills were referred to Select Committees instead of a single member; and legislative business was conducted in public instead of in secret"<sup>1</sup> In short, a beginning of the parliamentary system was made.

The appointment of a separate governor for Bengal while relieving the Governor-General of his heavy burden on the one hand removed a cause of one of the major grievances of the Presidencies—who blamed the Governor-General of a special leaning towards Bengal—on the other. The provincial representatives in the Central Legislative Council ensured that the provincial interests would not be overlooked. The idea of including non-official members was proposed, and though it was dropped before the strong opposition of Sir Charles Wood, the proposal had a great importance for the future developments.

The appointment of the English Law Commission to give a definite shape to the reports of the Indian Law Commission was also important. The Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code were thus produced, which was no insignificant service rendered to the Indian cause.

There, however, still remained certain defects in the existing set-

1. Cowell, Herbert, *History of the Constitution of the Courts and Legislative Authorities in India*, 1936.



up. The Double Government at home was not yet abolished, and the Directors continued enjoying the powers to recall any official from India. Nor was the Legislative Council made what could have been expected. This body was too small, the separation of the legislative from the executive functions was incomplete, the public opinion got no representation, and one could condemn in the words of Sir Bartle Frere, "the perilous experiment of continuing to legislate for millions of people with few means of knowing except by rebellion, whether the laws suit them or not." Sir Syed Ahmed also condemned this, and the fact was brought home by the Mutiny of 1857.<sup>1</sup> The institution of the English Law Commission was resented both by the people and the Government of India. This enabled the Home Government to interfere in the details of the Indian legislation, which tried to reduce the Indian Legislative Council to a mere registering body.

The aspirations towards decentralisation also could not be satisfied. The purse continued to be controlled by the Centre as enviously as ever, as was legislation and the other problem. The introduction of the competitive examinations for the Indian Civil Services also proved only to be a half measure. The examinations were to be conducted in England where obviously the Indians only from well-to-do families could go. The difficulties of the long journey, the huge amounts of expenditure and competing in a strange surrounding, all these were great hurdles before the Indians aspiring for these services. The simultaneous examinations in India were as yet a far cry. Equality of opportunity under these circumstances was therefore nothing but a hoax.

Yet, a beginning towards the parliamentary system in India was made, although it was very much against the wishes of the framers of the Act. Sir Charles Wood the President of the Board of Control said : "I do not look upon it (Indian Legislative Council) as some of the young Indians do, as the nucleus and beginning of a constitutional parliament in India." Yet as it has been aptly remarked, Wood "was neither the first nor the last legislator to fail in limiting consequences of Bill to his intentions." Very unexpectedly, the Council soon became an Anglo-Indian House of Commons. It questioned the executive acts, and forced it to lay confidential papers before them. The Council refused permission to submit the legislative projects before the Home authorities before they were considered by the Council itself. The legislation required by the Home authorities was not always passed, and the Council asserted its right to legislative independence. Leaving aside the other provisions, the provisions concerning the Legislative Council were alone sufficient to bring the Act to be called one of the important constitutional measures of the 19th century.

1. Ahmed, Sir Syed, *Essays on Causes of Indian Revolt*, (Tr. by M.N. Lees).

## THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

*The Non-Regulation System.* One important reform of the time of Lord Dalhousie was that instead of extending the existing laws and regulations to the newly acquired territories with one stroke of the pen, whether they suited them or not, these territories were placed under what was known as the 'non-regulation system' of administration. This system implied the recognition of the local laws and customs of a territory, so far as they did not act against the British sense of justice and equity. The administration of a locality was presided over by a Commissioner, who was directly responsible to the Governor-General, the main principle of it being to collect revenues and maintain law and order.

The administration of criminal justice under this system was crude; while in civil cases where there was no definitely prescribed law and where only the local customs had to be applied so far as they appealed to the British sense of justice, nothing but the caprice of the judge worked. The district officer combined in himself all the powers : executive, police and judicial. There was no ambition to ameliorate the lot of the common man. Although in the Punjab, the system did give a praiseworthy account of itself, elsewhere the only merit of it was an economy of personnel<sup>1</sup>.

*The Military and Strategic Changes.* The annexation of the new territories in the time of Dalhousie shifted the centre of administrative and military gravity from Bengal to the north-west. Occupation of the Punjab brought the Company's frontiers into contiguity with those of Afghanistan, and hence nearer to the Russian menace in Central Asia. This made some military and strategic changes imperative, which were introduced by Dalhousie.

The Headquarters of the Bengal Artillery were shifted from Calcutta to Meerut. There was in fact a general movement of troops to North, the Army Headquarters being established at Simla. Lord Dalhousie had the foresightedness of a statesman, and he knew that the annexation of titles and pensions, and of the states particularly like Oudh, was bound to rouse unrest amongst the Indian sepoys. He therefore followed the triple policy of reduction, disintegration and distribution of the regular Indian troops. Besides, a new irregular force was raised in the Punjab, and the formation of Gurkha regiment was encouraged. Lord Dalhousie also proposed to the Home authorities to send more British troops to India, which however could not be done, England being involved in troubles with Russia in Europe at the time. Dalhousie himself shifted with his Council to Simla, from where he could manage all these affairs more easily.

1. Hunter, *Marquess of Dalhousie* (Indian reprint, 1962), pp. 128-31.

Besides the increase in the British troops in India, Dalhousie made many other proposals in this field, which if accepted, assert the supporters of Lord Dalhousie, the mutiny should have been averted. The assertion, however, seems to be of doubtful merit. The seeds of the mutiny had already been sown, rather much before Dalhousie himself came to India. An impetus to it was given by Dalhousie. The mutiny, therefore, was bound to come, though we might concede that if Dalhousie's proposals had been accepted it could have been postponed for a while.

*Railway and Telegraph.* A great administrator as he was, to Dalhousie also belongs the credit of giving an impetus to the construction of railway lines and laying of the telegraph wires. He gave contracts to the English corporations for the purpose, giving them all the facilities, and in addition guaranteeing them an interest on their investment for which the Government of India were made liable irrespective of the enormous profits which the corporations themselves might make.

The critics of Dalhousie, however, see in these administrative achievements too the design only of imperialistic exploitation. The few railway lines which were constructed in his time, they say, were mainly of strategic value meant for the speedy movement of troops. They were constructed at an enormous cost to the Indian tax-payer, and for an equally enormous profit to the British capitalist, as they worked as an effective outlet for the British capital the total investment of which on the railway lines in India by 1879 was over £ 98,000,000. The disaffection of the Indians was there, and their uprising could any day be expected. Dalhousie must have thought that the telegraph lines would keep the administrative authorities in touch with each other and help in keeping an effective watch over the public movements; while the railway lines would help in handling a trouble in time. They were also calculated to offer new markets for the English produce, as Dalhousie himself remarked: "new markets are opening to us on this side of the globe under circumstances which defy the foresight of the wisest to estimate their probable value, or calculate their future extent."<sup>1</sup> All these therefore could at best be considered only as an instrument of imperialism, developed for the strengthening of the British rule.

Moreover, the state guarantee of interest on the investment was bad as a business proposition, and deceitful to the Indian tax-payer. The construction of these works might therefore represent only an evolution of the military imperialism into an economic one.

There is no doubt that these works did help in the integration of the Indian society. When the people from one part of the country could travel easily to another part, when high and the low castes all sat together in the same compartment for the purpose of a travel,

1. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 136

they came closer together and their caste prejudices began slowly to fade away. The enormous help which these works rendered to the growth of political consciousness will be a subject of our discussion later. All these consequences, however, were unintentional and unforeseen by Dalhousie. Had he foreseen such possibilities, he may have possibly diverted his energy into a different channel.

*The Postal System.* Some praiseworthy reforms were introduced by Dalhousie in the postal system of the country. The existing system was corrupt, and involved a lot of delay and difficulties. No uniform postal rates were applied, and the charges on the letters were realised in cash, and therefore always in excess, from the receivers and not from the senders.

Dalhousie appointed a commission to recommend reforms. Its proposals being accepted, a uniform rate of half an anna for a letter weighing up to half a tola was introduced. The charges were to be realised from the sender, not in cash, but in stamps. The post offices, in this way, were made a good source of earning.<sup>1</sup>

*The Commercial Reforms.* Besides, Dalhousie was a believer of the doctrine of free trade. He declared all the ports of India free. Lighthouses and harbour accommodation were considerably improved, and all the checks and obstacles in the way of the free flow of goods and capital were made to go.

The consequences of this policy of Dalhousie were very far-reaching due to the fact that they proved to be another effective weapon for the economic exploitation of this country. The Indian markets were thrown open to the British industrial products, which coming at cheaper rates pushed the Indian industries slowly to extinction. India was thrown back on her agriculture, the pressure on which thus, increased, dividing the agricultural income into many hands and thus bringing about poverty.

The export of the raw material from India increased. Thus between the years 1848 and 1856, the value of the export of raw cotton increased from £ 1½ million to £ 3½ million; and that of grain from £ 0.89 million to £ 2.90 million. At the same time the import of the British manufactured goods and treasure increased from £ 10½ million to £ 25½ million. The same material when exported in a raw form fetched a very little amount of money, while when imported in the manufactured form from the British industries it took away large amounts of it. The balance of trade being thus destroyed, the Indian economy suffered a very heavy blow. The coasting industry

1. See Das, M.N., *Economic and Social Development of Modern India*, (1848-1856), pp. 161-199.

went entirely into the British hands; and the Indian capital already shy due to a discriminative policy of the British, and due to wars, became blighted. Such were the consequences of Dalhousie's well-intended commercial reforms.

*The Public Works Department.* The Public Works Department was also organised by Dalhousie on new lines. Previously this department was under the control of the Military Board. Dalhousie was neither in favour of this Department remaining under military control, nor did he like an administration by a Board for it. An individual responsibility suited his inclinations the best.

The system of Military Board for the Department was therefore abolished. In each Presidency a separate Public Works Department was opened, and was placed in the charge of a Chief Engineer who was assisted by executive officers. All these officers were English. For the training of Indians for these services, engineering colleges were opened at Roorkee and elsewhere. The Public Works Departments thus established, immediately took the construction and repair of roads, canals, bridges and other works of public utility in hand. And within a short time the beneficent works of this Department began to make their appearance.

*The Education Policy.* Besides, "Dalhousie's term of office," as Moreland and Chatterjee write, "must be remembered for the formulation of a comprehensive policy of public instructions."<sup>1</sup> The educational achievements already made before the time of Dalhousie had not been very great, though an impetus to education had been given by Lord William Bentinck who laid down a policy which was to be officially pursued by the Government in this field. After the adoption of this policy new schools and colleges had been opened. Bentinck opened a Medical College at Calcutta for the teaching of the Western medical science to the Indians. Brahmo Samaj opened several institutions. And the vernacular education though going to the background, was also offered a consideration by Lord Auckland who granted Rs 500 a month to the Asiatic Society of Bengal. For local developments Elphinstone carried on his efforts in Bombay; while Thompson in Agra and Munro in Madras also did not make insignificant contributions. Thompson rather started an interesting experiment known as *Halqa bandi*, under which, supported by one per cent cess on land revenue, for every definite number of villages a Primary School was opened, while every Tehsil got a Middle School and every district a High School.

Before 1854 certain important and positive steps for the development of English education, and openly for propagating Christianity were also taken by the Christian Missionaries. Bible class in their

1. Moreland and Chatterjee, *A Short History of India*, p. 358.

institutions was compulsory, as their declared purpose was "to combine in close inseparable and harmonious union, what has been called a useful secular with a decidedly religious education." The first important institution was opened in 1716 by Danish Missionaries for the training of teachers in Madras, followed by two charity schools in 1717. English schools were also opened, and missionaries like David Hare, Thomas, Carey, Marshman and Ward did a lot of work starting their activities at Serampore in 1793. The Wilson College of Bombay and the Christian College of Madras were important missionary achievements. The St. John's College of Agra was started in 1853, and institutions were also established at Nagpur, Masaulipatam and other places which soon flourished and began to rope many Indians into Christianity.

*Wood's Despatch of 1854.* The turning point in the history of education in India, however, came only in the time of Dalhousie in 1854. Before this year the English system and language which had been chosen for official purposes invited the disapproval of the Orientalists. Already a little concession had been made to them by Auckland, as mentioned above. But that was not sufficient. A Parliamentary Committee appointed for the purpose made its recommendations, on the basis of which Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control, drafted his Despatch of 1854, which for many years remained as a guiding star in the field. Sir Wood declared that in India the British had to deal with "a race of people slow to change, bound up by religious prejudices and antiquated customs. There are there in fact many—I had almost said all—the obstacles to rapid progress." And therefore the British approach to the subject required a change, for which he made the following recommendations in his despatch, which is popularly known as the "Wood's Despatch of 1854."

The Despatch split up into points, asserted these principles : first, that the safeguarding of the educational interests of the Indians committed to the British charge should be accepted by the Government as an official responsibility; second, that the aim of the education system and policy should be the diffusion of the Arts, Science and Philosophy of Europe, so that trustworthy men may be produced capable of holding offices under the Company; third, that English as the medium of education should not be insisted upon at all stages, it should be so used only when a sufficient knowledge of it has been gained; fourth, that the study of the Indian languages should be encouraged so as to make communication between the masses and the Government officials easier; fifth, that the vernaculars may also be used for the teaching of European knowledge at a proper level of studies; sixth, that Macaulay's 'Filtration Theory' which meant imparting of education only to upper classes, with the belief that therefrom it would filter down to the masses should be abandoned, and in its place the indigenous schools should be made a foundation of the system; seventh; that the system of grants-in-aid should

be started with its definite rules to encourage private enterprise to open educational institutions; eighth, that greater attention should be paid to elementary schools; ninth, that a comprehensive system of scholarships should be instituted to help the deserving students; tenth, that professional institutions should be established for training students in law, medicine, agriculture, methods of teaching in schools, etc.; eleventh, that special facilities and encouragement should be provided for female education and twelfth, that the existing Government institutions should be continued and new ones should be added, giving particular attention to the establishment of Middle Schools.

Regarding the educational machinery, it was recommended that a separate Department of Public Instructions be established in every province under a Director of general education assisted by inspecting officers who should make periodical reports of educational work in the respective province. For the encouragement of liberal education by conferring academic degrees, the Government could establish universities which could be both affiliating and also examining bodies. Each university should have a Chancellor and a Vice-Chancellor, and should be organised on the pattern of London University, with a Senate to frame rules for conducting examinations and controlling funds and professorships at the head of the different branches of education such as classical and oriental languages, law and civil engineering, etc. A beginning could be made with universities at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras where a sufficient number of institutions to supply properly qualified candidates for receiving degrees was forthcoming; under the university control would be colleges affiliated to the university which could impart education from Intermediate to Degree level. Under college level would be a network of schools graded as Primary, Middle, High and Anglo-Vernacular schools, which could impart education in the lower classes through the Indian vernaculars.

The Wood's Despatch is said to be the 'Magna Carta' of education in India. It outlined in definite terms the educational machinery that India was going to have. Due provision of grants-in-aid was a great step taken which encouraged private enterprises to come forth and exert their might in the field. The provision to encourage indigenous schools was a laudable step, and female education and professional education all received due attention by it. There were, however, certain defects which made it possible for the Government to escape the spirit of some of its important provisions

The indigenous schools for instance received no proper encouragement as was required, moral and physical education received no proper attention and the universities established proved to be mere examining bodies with no high principles of culture. However, considering it to be the first such step, it was good, and one wonders at the



depth of the subject to which its authors were really able to reach.

Lady Dalhousie died in 1853 and the remaining years of Dalhousie became difficult to live. He retired from India in 1856, and thus replied to the farewell address at Calcutta: "I am wearied and worn, and have no other thought or wish than to seek the retirement of which I stand in need, and which is all I am now fit for." In 1857 he wrote: "I am weak, incapable of exertion of resolution, tormented with numbness of my nose and throat, without any appetite—and done."<sup>1</sup> When mutiny broke out in India, he was too weak to participate in any parliamentary discussions. But as he himself was inculpated, but could not defend himself he found whatever peace of mind he had was gone. He spent his winter of 1857-58 at Malta, but got no relief. Two years before he died, he wrote to a friend in India: "Beware my good friend, how you follow my stupid example, and do not remain in India when your health requires you to leave it—either from a sense of supposed duty, or from any other motive I have paid heavily for doing so."<sup>2</sup> He died in 1860.

"Lord Dalhousie." comments W.W. Hunter, "converted the stationary India of Lord Wellesley into the progressive India of our own day."<sup>3</sup> A great empire builder as he was, amongst his greatest achievements was the large expansion of the East India Company's territorial possessions by his ruthless policy of conquests and annexations. Punjab alone was a prize as big as a large kingdom of Europe. His abolition of titles and pensions saved large amounts of money for the Company's coffers. His military and strategic changes increased the striking power of the British Indian empire. Railway and telegraph lines strengthened and consolidated its administrative and defensive powers yet further. And his commercial reforms and the doctrines of free trade flung open the Indian markets for the British industrial produce.

His achievements for the East India Company were great indeed, but to India he was considered only an imperial exploiter. "As an imperial administrator," Sir Richard Temple writes of him; "he

1. Hunter, W.W., *op. cit.*, (Indian Reprint), pp. 32, 33.

2. *ibid.*, p. 36.

3. *ibid.*, p. 124.



has never been surpassed and seldom equalled by any of the illustrious men whom England has sent forth to govern India."<sup>1</sup> His policy of annexations was too aggressive and ruthless. "Surely," writes Ludlow, "there was not a woman whom such annexations did not tend to make our enemy, not a child whom they did not tend to train upon hatred to the Firangee rule."<sup>2</sup> Dalhousie subordinated the Indian economy to the British industrial system, and drained India of her wealth.

Though it is difficult to agree that but for his imperialistic and aggressive policies in India the Mutiny of 1857 should not have occurred at all, there is absolutely no doubt that it should have been postponed for a considerable time if Dalhousie had not come to this country. Whereas his policy of annexations alienated a large number of Indians against the British in India, his development of railways, whatever their purpose, gave them a unity of action. The cheap postal system made it easy for the Indian propaganda to flow from one part of the country to the other, and through railways the Indian leaders could easily travel and organise the people into a mighty political movement.

Yet there is no doubt that some of his reforms were indeed well-intentioned. His organisation of the Public Works Department gave an impetus to the development of the public utility works. The development of the educational policy and the 'Wood's Education Despatch of 1854' constitute an important landmark in the history of education in India.

Thompson and Garratt aver: "All things weighed, he was the greatest of the Governor-Generals after Warren Hastings; and as a man he has a place all to himself, his pluck and intellect making of steadfast conscientiousness a thing of exceeding loveliness."<sup>3</sup> Ramsay Muir, supporting the above view, writes, "Dalhousie was a man of immense ability and energy, untiring industry, inflexible will, absolute honesty of purpose, and real devotion to the greatness of his own country and the welfare of her Indian subjects. For sheer force of personality two only among the long line of governors deserve to be compared with him—Warren Hastings and Wellesley. He was a greater man than Wellesley, because he took a far deeper view of the problems of government, he was a lesser man than Hastings because he lacked Hastings' generous humanity, his power of reading the minds of his colleagues and understanding

1. Temple, Sir R., *Men and Events of My Time in India*, p. 347.
2. Ludlow, *British India*, p. 261.
3. Thompson and Garrat, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, pp. 420-21.

the point of view of the millions that he so resolutely laboured to save.”<sup>1</sup>

We have criticised Dalhousie's policy of annexations, which no doubt was ruthless and opposed to the treaty engagements entered into by his predecessors. Yet it had its brighter side as well, as it helped India to get rid of a few of the antiquated and outmoded medley of Indian princes whose life, may be with a few exceptions, was a life only of debauchery, pleasure-hunting and ease of big harems and moral dissipation. V.B. Kulkarni writes : “He is entitled to our respect, not on account of the doctrine of lapse, which he did not invent, nor even because of his annexations, which were not large enough, seeing that a bewildering medley of states were still left to hamper India's unity and progress but because he helped the country to wake up from its long slumber, to shake off its infirmities and eventually to take its place in the comity of free nations. It is idle to ask whether the modern appurtenances of civilization, represented by the railway and the telegraph, were introduced in India as an act of disinterested generosity; whatever the motive, it cannot be gainsaid that India rediscovered her oneness almost entirely on account of them and as a result of her coming, for the first time after many centuries. under a single frame of Government.”<sup>2</sup>

1. Ramsay Muir, *Making of British India*, p. 337.

2. Kulkarni, V.B., *British Statesmen in India*, p. 166.

## Clemency Canning, 1856-1862

Charles John Canning, the third son of George Canning, a great British Statesman (who became Foreign Secretary 1822-27 and then Prime Minister of England for a short time from April to August 1827)—was born on 14 December 1812. His mother was the daughter of General John Scott of Balcomie. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, having Granville, Dalhousie, Gladstone and Elgin among his contemporaries at the latter place where he distinguished himself by winning a college prize for a Latin poem. His father, George Canning died on 8 August 1827 after which his mother became Viscountess Canning of Kilbrahan, co. Kilkenny. He took his degree in 1833 and was married in 1835 to Charlotte Stuart, a daughter of Lord Stuart de Rothesay, Ambassador at Paris (1815 to 1830). The Queen of George III was the godmother of his wife. In 1836 Charles became M.P. for Warwick, but the next year his mother died. He succeeded her and became a member of the House of Lords.

Lord Canning became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Peel's Ministry in 1841, the following year his wife became Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen which increased his influence further. In 1845 he became a Privy Councillor. Lord Aberdeen's Coalition Ministry made him Postmaster-General in 1852, but later when Palmerston came to power, he offered him the post of Governor-General in India. Canning landed at Bombay on 26 January 1856, to assume charge of his new office from Lord Dalhousie.

### EARLY CHANGES

Before Canning arrived in India, the Charter Act of 1853, as we have already seen, had renewed the Company's charter not for twenty years, as usual, but for any period the Crown pleased to grant it. It prepared the ground for the direct assumption of powers

in India by the Crown at its will. Hardly two years passed after Canning's arrival, when this actually happened. But before the Crown directly took over, the Mutiny of 1857 took place. In the meanwhile assisted by the distinguished members of his Council, Peter Grant, Barnes Peacock, Sir John Low, J.A. Dorin and General Anson, Canning harnessed himself to the work.

*War with Persia.* The first important problem that Canning had to face in India, was the infiltration into Herat by the pro-Russian Persia. Herat which formed the western frontier of Afghanistan, was considered by some English statesmen as the 'key to India,' and Canning was afraid lest the extension of the Russian influence should "convert Persia, and perhaps her nearer neighbours into a perpetual blister upon us."<sup>1</sup> The British did not at the time enjoy good relations with Persia from where their envoy Charles Murray withdrew in protest for the insults he had suffered in the Persian Court. The English Cabinet was divided with regard to the Russian threat to India, which even if it existed, could be better operated upon "in Europe where we can do so with most effect,"<sup>2</sup> the Duke of Argyll held.

Canning, however, considered the Russian danger real, and he was sure that nothing short of a war could stop Persia from the course of action on which she had embarked. On 1 November 1856, therefore, the war on Persia was declared in the name of the East India Company. The British forces marched, Kharak in the Persian Gulf was occupied on 4 December, and on the 10th of the same month Bushire fell. There was not much of fighting, and on 4 March 1857 the peace treaty was signed by which the Shah of Persia undertook to evacuate Herat, to receive Murray at his Court, and to accept the Indian Government's mediation in disputes with Afghanistan. Some critics termed the treaty too lenient, for Kharak and Bushire already occupied, were returned and no indemnity was realised from the Shah. But peace with Persia came just in time, when mutiny broke out at Meerut, and not a soldier could now be spared for an adventure abroad.

*Afghanistan.* In the meanwhile a friendly treaty was signed on 26 January, by Herbert Edwardes, with Dost Muhammad of Afghanistan, as a result of which Dost declared, "I have made an alliance with the British Government, and, come what may, I will keep it till death."<sup>3</sup> Dost kept his promise, and remained faithful to the British even during the Indian Mutiny when all temptations to the contrary existed.

1. Maclagan, Michael, *Clemency Canning*, p. 52.

2. *ibid.*, p. 51.

3. *ibid.*, p. 54.

**Oudh.** Of other developments before the mutiny, Oudh had been annexed, Canning appointed Coverly Jackson, a hot-headed man, as the Chief-Commissioner. Jackson, however, was later on succeeded on 1 January 1857 by Henry Lawrence under whom dislodgement of *Talukdars*, the quasi-feudal lords of villages who indulged in all types of extortion, was continued. This was to the benefit of the peasants; who, however, thanks to their ignorant attachments to the old masters, could not appreciate it. Discontentment, therefore, spread among both the classes, and Oudh became a hot-bed of intrigues and agitation against the British.

**Other Changes.** Certain military reforms were also attempted. An order was thus issued making it incumbent on the new recruits to agree to be posted anywhere outside India. Among social reforms were the removal of some legal obstacles in the way of widow remarriage, followed by another Bill against polygamy among Kulin Brahmins who "permitted an almost illimitable number of wives, some of whom the husband never saw and with many of whom he never cohabited."<sup>1</sup> In 1856 the heir-apparent of the defunct Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah died. Canning proposed that the new legal heir to the Emperor should be recognised only if he gave up the title of King and agreed to live outside Delhi. This aroused a lot of consternation among some people. Canning also gave his attention to the disorganised finance, deficit budgets and mounting debts which had become a more serious problem as a result of Dalhousie's expansionist policy. But before he could do much, the Persian war and the great mutiny of 1857 intervened, which reduced the whole thing to chaos. He had to postpone the consideration of these problems, and in the meanwhile to face what now befell the British.

### THE MUTINY OF 1857

The most important event of the time of Lord Canning in India was the Mutiny of 1857 which rocked the whole land, and for once at least threw the mighty British power into a whirlwind of confusion. The character of this Mutiny has been variously commented upon. One view is thus held by persons such as V.D. Savarkar, according to whom it was an organised national movement. Its "great principles," writes Savarkar, "were Swadharma and Swaraj.... (and) in these two, lies the root principle of the Revolutionary War."<sup>2</sup> Mr Ashoka Mehta supports this view and forwards several arguments in this connection. He asserts that although the sepoys were the backbone of the Mutiny, yet it would be wrong to call it essentially a sepoy mutiny. The number of civilians killed was as large as that of the sepoys. At some places the sepoys themselves were rather

1. *ibid.* p. 66.

2. Savarkar, V.D., *The Indian War of Independence*, p. 7.

egged on to action by the civil population. When General Havelock wanted to ferry his soldiers across the river, the refusal of the boatmen either to offer their boats or their services is a clear testimony to the part which the civil population played. Besides, the rapidity with which the mutiny spread clearly shows how in some areas at least it enjoyed a strong mass support. The Hindu-Muslim harmony which the Mutiny depicted also points towards the same direction. Bahadur Shah, the Mughal emperor, prohibited the slaughter of cows throughout the country, and wrote to the princes of Rajputana in clear words, as Mr Ashoka Mehta quotes : "I have no desire left of ruling over India... I am willing to resign my imperial powers and authority in the hands of any confederacy of native princes who are chosen to exercise it." And all this clearly points towards the national character of the Mutiny<sup>1</sup>

According to Outram, however, it was no national uprising. It was rather, in his view, a Muslim conspiracy which made capital of the Hindu grievances and was precipitated by the incident of cartridges.

The most widely supported view, however, is that of Sir John Lawrence who held that it was essentially a sepoy uprising. It broke out as a result of the cartridge incident, but was made use of by the other elements which being disgusted with the British in India, were in search of some such opportunity to re-assert their position. It was no national movement, as Rawlinson also supports : "It would be inaccurate to describe the Mutiny as a national revolution, for nationalism was not as yet a factor in Indian politics."<sup>2</sup> According to Sir John Seeley too, it was "wholly unpatriotic and selfish sepoy mutiny with no native leadership and no popular support." P.E. Roberts also supports this view; and so does Dr R.C. Majumdar in his recently published book, *The Sepoy Mutiny and Revolt of 1857*. Maulana Azad may also be quoted in this connection. He thus writes : "In the light of the available evidence, we are therefore forced to the conclusion that the uprising of 1857 was not the result of careful planning nor were there any master-minds behind it... This was due not to the conspiracy of a few individuals or groups but to the growing discontent of a large number of people.... Patriotism had to be reinforced by an appeal to religious passion before the people rose."<sup>3</sup>

In fact several arguments can be forwarded to support the view

1. Ashoka Mehta's booklet, *1857—The Great Rebellion*.
2. Rawlinson, *The British Achievement in India* (1948), p. 103.
3. In an introduction to *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, by S.N. Sen, pp. xiii-xv; see also Majumdar, R.C., *History of Freedom Movement in India* (1963), 3 vols; Majumdar, R.C., *Sepoy Mutiny* (1963); Majumdar, R.C., *Three Phases of India's Struggle for Freedom*.

that it was no organised national movement, but simply a sepoy outbreak, advantage of which was taken by several interested elements. The widespread mutinous outbreaks occurred only at those places where the lead was given by the sepoys. For instance in Rajasthan there were no large-scale uprisings, because here "the ground was not prepared by a successful rising of the sepoys." Same among the Marathas. Although the Marathas just recently had suffered at the hands of the British, yet among them there were no large-scale uprisings, because there were no sepoy outbreaks in their midst. Moreover, rarely do we come across persons who should have been animated in their revolt by some enlightened principle of love for the nation. During the course of their action some might have developed this idea, but there are no proofs to show that an organised beginning towards this direction was made anywhere. Generally only local causes of love of booty, adventure, or superstitious belief, such as, one hundred years having passed after the Battle of Plassey of 1757, the time had come for the British departure, conditioned the uprising. In the Gaya district, for instance, the local *zamindars* thinking that the British had been destroyed, actually killed many persons and looted their property.

Nor did the so-called national heroes possess any well-knit plan of their campaigns or at least a regular contact with one another. There was no clear picture before them, of the sort of future they were going to build for the whole nation. They were all inspired by their selfish interests or conditioned only by local causes. Delhi was the backbone of the mutineers. Yet, when it was besieged by the British, Nana Saheb prevented the Kanpur troops from marching to relieve the capital perhaps because he feared that the mutineers' successes in Delhi would promote Bahadur Shah as the national ruler to whom he was not prepared to play the second fiddle.

Then, only one of the three provincial armies mutinied. Many chiefs and thousands of landlords remained loyal. Nor did every province rise in arms. The Punjab, one of the most important provinces of the British Indian empire, rather helped the British save their power in India. Clearly thus, it was no national movement based on any well-knit organisation, or on some enlightened principles of national independence.

Nor would it be correct to say that it was a Muslim conspiracy making capital of some Hindu grievances. Although Bahadur Shah did make use of it, there are reasons to believe that he was rather compelled to do so. "In fact the course of the trial made it clear," says Maulana Azad, "that the Mutiny was as much a surprise to Bahadur Shah as to the British."<sup>1</sup>

1. Maulana Azad in his address to the 31st Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission, 1955.

The facts are therefore clear. Right from the beginning of the British rule in India disaffection against them had been slowly piling up amongst the sepoys, the people and the princes of this country. Annexation of Oudh sent thousands of sepoys and civil servants of this state adrift. *Taluqdars* of the state suffered as a result of the new land policy. And then the way the states like Jhansi and Satara were extinguished, all these and many others were the political causes. Ruin of the Indian trade and industry, and the oppressive agrarian policy and other such factors constituted the economic causes. The Christian missionary activities, and some legal measures such as the Religious Disabilities Act of 1856, constituted the religious and social causes. Then there were the purely administrative causes. And all these created a combustible material in all parts of the country.

It may correctly therefore be repeated, though there was a disgruntled and disaffected mass of people all over the country, yet it was not so due to some single national cause, but due to different small and local issues. And further that, despite the fact that this disaffected mass of people existed, the Mutiny was primarily a sepoy Mutiny in which the interested hands later on joined. There was absolutely no national movement in the country. The fact will be clear from the following account.

### The Causes

Of the various causes which brought about disaffection among the people and some princes and *zamindars* of this country, and which provided the combustible material for the Mutiny, the following may be mentioned.

*Political Causes.* The political causes of the Mutiny lay in the history of the development of the British power in India. The effort made in 1857 to overthrow the British rule in this country was not the first effort. Such efforts had in fact been made earlier as well, but they had all failed. The English got a chance to fish in the troubled waters of India when disintegration followed the death of Aurangzeb; Marathas establishing their supremacy in the Maharashtra proper and some parts of Southern India, and the Governors of Bengal, Oudh and the Deccan declaring themselves as virtually independent states. This disintegration was completed by Nadir Shah. When India was weak and divided, the English had their best chance. Their success was made easier by a triple factor : first that the Indian soldiers were less disciplined and less skilled than the English; secondly, that they could be easily made to fight against their own countrymen; and thirdly, that it was possible for the British to take sides in the local political quarrels and draw the best advantage out of them.



The British had their first great political gain in Bengal when they intrigued with Mir Jaffar, a Commander of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula. In the battle of Plassey in 1757 the Nawab's commanders standing aloof, the British were easily able to defeat the Nawab, who was beheaded and Mir Jaffar succeeded in his place and became a puppet in the British hands. The people of Bengal accepted the British control because they could not as yet realise the consequences of it, and moreover they had been accustomed to such changes.

As, however, the British developed their hold on this country, the political opposition grew. Shah Alam, the Emperor at Delhi led three expeditions against the British in Bengal between March 1759 and January 1761. But they all failed.

Mir Jaffar too, soon realised his folly. He and his successor Mir Kasim both chafed under the British yoke, and in the time of the latter the first real effort to overthrow the British rule was made when he joined hands with Shah Alam and Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Oudh, in a confederacy against the British. The confederacy however was defeated in the Battle of Buxar in 1764. Mir Kasim fled away, while Shah Alam and Shuja-ud-Daula signed humiliating treaties with the British; the former making a legal grant of the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the English. This added a real strength to the British political power in India.

Slowly, but surely, the British went on developing their power, bringing under their yoke one principality after another. In the time of Warren Hastings another joint effort was made to overthrow the British power when Hyder Ali of Mysore tried to organise a confederacy with the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Hastings' diplomacy however succeeded, and Hyder Ali failed in his designs. Towards the close of the 18th century, yet another effort was made between the Nawab of Oudh, Sindhia, Tipu Sultan, and Zaman Shah of Kabul, to organise a confederacy against the British; the details of which however are not known.

The British went on developing their power. Mysore was conquered in 1799. Gurkhas humbled in 1814-15 and the Marathas finally crushed in 1817-19. To disarm the criticism and suspicion, instead of conquering and annexing the Indian states, Wellesley had evolved the policy of "subsidiary alliance", under which those Indian princes who entered it, maintained British troops at their own expense, while the latter granted them internal autonomy and internal and external protection. Here was a master-stroke of the British political policy in India. The princes under the subsidiary alliance had neither to fear any external aggression nor an internal commotion. Nor was it the policy of the British to encourage an independent and original talent in them. Their policy, as the Tory Under-Secretary of State for India remarked in the Commons, was rather

to promote docile and unpretending mediocrity. Little wonder, these princes grew callous and irresponsible in their administrative duties.

As the administration of these states grew corrupt and oppressive under this system, the moral and material conditions of the people deteriorated fast, and the British, instead of realising their responsibility in it, began to put the entire blame on the shoulders of the princes; and declaring them unfit to rule, began to forward a new justification that their power should be ended, and the states be annexed for the benefit of the people.

A new turn therefore was given to the British policy towards these states when Lord Dalhousie arrived in India. The policy of Doctrine of Lapse was adopted, as we have already seen, and one state after another, one title and one pension after another began to be annexed and confiscated. The big state of Nagpur was declared lapsed. The Punjab was annexed, and Satara, Jhansi, Sambhalpur and others went the same way; the most tyrannical of such of his acts being the annexation of Oudh. The titles and pensions of Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, of the Nawab of Carnatic and of Tanjore, were swept away. And there was a proposal to abolish the title of the nominal Emperor of Delhi as well, though at the suggestion of the Court of Directors the action was deferred till the death of the beneficiary. Fuel was added to the fire of discontentment as a result of the utterances of some irresponsible officers like Sir Charles Napier, who declared: "Were I the Emperor of India for twelve years, no Indian prince should exist. The Nizam should be no more heard of—Nepal would be ours."

Dalhousie's ruthless policy of annexations and extermination brought about a commotion in the country, and every prince and *zamindar* of India began to fear his safety. Abolition of the pension of Nana Saheb, and annexation of Nagpur and Satara, extinguished the three historic and royal families towards whom the Marathas used to look with pride. Satara had been the seat of the descendants of the great hero Shivaji, and Nagpur had been held by the venerated family of Bhonsla. Nor was their extermination done in an honourable manner. In the case of Nagpur, for instance, as Kaye writes: "The livestock and dead stock of the Bhonsla were sent to the hammer...royal elephants, horses and bullocks were sold off at the price of carrion;... furniture was removed, and the jewels of the Bhonsla family, with a few propitiatory exceptions, were sent to Calcutta market. And I have heard it said that these seizures, these sales, created a worse impression not only in Berar, but in the surrounding provinces, than the seizure of the kingdom itself."<sup>1</sup>

1: Kaye, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 327-29.

After the annexation of these states, heavy rates of land revenue assessment were imposed on the peasants. The new settlement excluded the middle-man, sending his family adrift. The resumption of the rent-free tenures begun earlier was carried forward ruthlessly and relentlessly by Dalhousie. Inam Commission was set up under an Act of 1852, which enquired into the titles of the landowners and within five years preceding the Mutiny as many as 20,000 families were dispossessed of their estates. All this undoubtedly alienated every class of people against the British. Princes began to fear for their principalities, *zamindars* for their land, title-holders and pension-holders for their titles and pensions, while the peasants groaned under heavy assessment. Annexation of every principality made countless number of persons, such as the court girls, the musicians and other artists, and many others who lived on the bounty and money payments of the royal families, homeless.

John Sullivan, a member of the Madras Council remarked thus : "Upon the extermination of a native state . an Englishman takes place of the sovereign under the name of commissioner, three or four of his associates displace as many as a dozen of the native aristocracy, while some hundreds of our troops take the place of the many thousands that every native chief supports. The little court disappears, trade languishes, the capital decays, the people are impoverished, the Englishman flourishes and acts like a sponge, drawing up riches from the banks of the Ganges and squeezing them down upon the banks of the Thames"<sup>1</sup>

*Economic Causes.* Prior to the British many invaders had come to India, but they had all been absorbed and Indianised. The case with the British however was different. Although they remained for about two centuries and a half in this country, they kept their identity distinct, keeping contact with their own motherland and draining India of her wealth to enrich their coffers in England.

Besides realising large sums of money from those whom the British supported for political gains, as they did from Mir Jaffar and Mir Kasim, the servants of the Company developed their hold on the inland trade, creating monopolies in every article of trade and even the necessities of life. Whenever they could, they made shameless discrimination against the Indians, subjecting their trade to heavy inland duties. Vansittart was charged by Scrafton of vast illegal acquisitions. Letters of Richard Barwell also show how he raised a colossal fortune by trade in every kind of article.

When the British came to power, they fashioned the whole Indian economy to meet the industrial requirements of England. Raw materials of India were exported to England at throw-away prices, and the British sent back to India finished goods at high prices. The Secretary of State, Lord Auckland, Major-General Richard, *The Indian Mutiny*, p. 17.,

and when the same raw materials were converted into manufactured goods, they were imported into this country at heavy prices. As the industrial revolution proceeded in England in the 19th century, the English industrial goods glutted the Indian markets. These goods being better finished and comparatively cheaper, pushed the Indian industry, which was as yet only a cottage and small-scale industry, to extinction. The masses of India were thrown back on agriculture the pressure on which increasing, divided the agricultural income into many parts, and thus increased the people's poverty. Dr Ishwari Prasad writes: "India became a milch cow to feed England while her own sons were gradually pushed to the starvation wage."<sup>1</sup>

Then, the agrarian policy that was followed in the territories held by the British, ruined the cultivators as well as the *zamindars*. The Permanent Settlement introduced by Cornwallis in Bengal, though ultimately beneficial, brought misery in the early stages. "The inexorable sale laws against the defaulting *zamindars*, in its ruthless course, unsettled many hereditary *zamindars* from their social and economic moorings. Great landholders and semi-royal families were more or less completely ruined, and that too, in some cases, for a temporary difficulty."<sup>2</sup> In Madras and Northern Circars where periodical settlements were made, the rates of assessment were raised at every new settlement, sometimes by as much as fifty per cent, thereby reducing the proprietors to mere farmers of revenue who could be ejected at any time for a default of revenue payment. The permanent settlement introduced later, rather ruined the *zamindars* for its sale-laws and over-assessment. In some parts of Madras the village system was tried, under which contracts were given for total assessment of a village. But assessments were generally heavy, the surplus going to the contractors who also realised unauthorised exactions. The peasants suffered heavily and they fled, thus putting the flourishing villages to a ruin.

The results of revenue settlements in Bombay and elsewhere were no better. Everywhere there were complaints of injustice and oppressive assessments. The peasants, as S.N. Sen writes, fell into "chronic debt and the bania, who was the village money-lender, was not an honest creditor."<sup>3</sup>

And then there was the damocles' sword—the resumption of rent-free holdings—hanging on their head, the awe of which robbed many of a peaceful night's sleep. The regulation in this connection was passed in 1793 which authorised collectors to recover such holdings as had no valid tenure, by a regular law-suit. The regulation of 1811 and those which followed made the practice of resumption harsh and

1. Prasad, I., and Subedar, S.K., *A History of Modern India*, p. 238.
2. Majumdar, Dr R.C., *The Sepoy Mutiny and Revolt of 1857*, p. 18.
3. Sen, S.N., *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, p. 34

offensive. In 1845 the tenure of these grants was restricted to the lifetime of the then holders. And within the five years that preceded the mutiny as many as 20,000 estates were resumed in the Deccan, and their holders sent to the streets to spread the venom of disaffection and mutiny. Such thus were the economic causes which contributed to the gathering clouds of mutiny.

*The Social and Religious Causes.* Nor were the social and religious causes lacking, Ghulam Hussain remarked in 1780: "The English seldom visit or see any of us."<sup>1</sup> And Warren Hastings admitted in 1784 that "a few years ago most of the Englishmen regarded the Indians almost as barbarians, and though the feeling has decreased it has not entirely disappeared." If such were the arrogant beliefs the English held towards the Indians, the Indian sense of self-respect was not going to stand it for long, nor were even the good administrative intentions of the British going to be appreciated by the Indian masses. The Indians were dishonest to a man, not to be compared even to the most backward persons of the most backward of the European nations, thus wrote Charles Grant, a responsible English officer, in a book published in 1792. And the most vile and loathsome language which the *Calcutta Review* used regarding the Bengalis before the Mutiny, was bound to sting its Bengali readers some day to the bitterest action.

The overgrowing number of the Christian missionaries were granted unrestricted entry into India by the Charter Act of 1813, their growing numbers of schools in which Indian religions were ridiculed, and the so called Black Act which rendered some benefits to the Indians was criticised. All these were factors which slowly but surely prepared ground for the mutiny. The Indians were converted to Christianity by these missionaries by force or fraud. When there was a general famine in 1837, for instance, the missionaries discovered the best opportunity to exploit the situation and "numerous orphans were converted to Christianity," thus wrote Syed Ahmed.<sup>2</sup> The Religious Disabilities Act of 1856 gave protection to the rights of the Hindus converted to Christianity. Mangles, the Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, openly declared: "Providence has entrusted the extensive empire of Hindustan to England in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Everyone must exert all his strength, that there may be no dilatoriness on any account in continuing in the country the grand work of making all Indians Christians."

Nor were under these circumstances, the good intentions of the British likely to be interpreted in the right spirit. The social legislation abolishing *sati* and legalising widow remarriage were supposed

1. Khan, Ghulam Hussain, *Styar-ul Mutakhrin*, Kanpur, 1897.

2. Ahmed, Sir Syed, *Causes of Indian Revolt* (translated by W.N. Lees), p. 10.

to be a naked British interference into the religious beliefs of the people. In the railways which the Englishman "began to construct, the telegraph wires by which he connected Calcutta with Peshawar and Bombay with Madras, the canal which he linked to the sacred stream of the Ganges, Brahmans fancied that sorcery was at work."<sup>1</sup>

There was a growing belief that the Indian religions were going to be destroyed and Christianity substituted in their stead. The people believed that the Government mixed dust of cow-bones in salt and other eatables. They adulterated ghee and threw the flesh of swine and cow into the wells to pollute the water. When, for instance, the prices of flour at Kanpur rose very high, a dealer from Meerut despatched large supplies of flour in Government steamers. But the people believed that dust of cow-bones had been mixed in it by the Government, and "although the flour was offered for sale at a greatly reduced price," thus wrote Sir Hope Grant in his private journal, "not a native would touch it preferring the pangs of hunger to the risk of contamination."<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances, therefore, the time was fast approaching when the people's toleration reached the limit.

*The Purely Administrative Causes.* Then there were grievances due purely to administrative causes. *Seir Mutakherin* explained in 1780 as to how in the early stages of the British occupation of Bengal, the people preferred their disciplined rule to the loose and corrupt administration of the Muslims. The real character of the British, however, soon became manifest, and hatred against them began to grow. This happened particularly after the British got the grant of *Diwani*. The Indian grievances against the British, as listed by Ghulam Hussein in the above-named work, show that the worst features of their administration were that 1) the English officers were not easily accessible to those whom they ruled. 2) There being vast differences of language and customs between the English and the Indians, the administration given to the latter suited their character the least. 3) The English having no familiarity with the Indians, their administration was impersonal, and hence, slow, it frequently involved changes of policy, etc. 4) The discriminative policy of the British deprived the Indians of benefits from commerce; and they being not enlisted into the army to the same extent as before, had few careers open to them. There were many other grievances listed by the learned author to which a detailed reference may not be made.<sup>3</sup>

These grievances were dilated upon by Sir Syed Ahmed in 1860, who declared that the most important cause of the mutiny had been the non-admittance of the Indians into the legislative and the

1. Holmes, T. Rice, *Cambridge History of India*, IV, p. 169; see also Majumdar, R.C., *The Sepoy Mutiny*.
2. Grant, Sir Hope, *Incidents in the Sepoy Mutiny*, (1857-58), p. 12.
3. See Khan Ghulam Hussain, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin*.

administrative branches of the Government because of which it failed to understand the Indian grievances in time.<sup>1</sup> The Muslims were perhaps the most dissatisfied lot in this respect. They had till recently occupied almost all the important civil and military posts in the Government, and had been the most privileged community of this country. Their old position having vanished, they now started lagging behind the other communities.

Government officers interfered in the transfers of land, and the collectors refused to enforce the decrees which went against the British interests, as it happened in the case of a *Raja* who got 138 villages out of 216 of his *taluka* confiscated. Flogging was abolished as a punishment for civil offences, and system of imprisonments substituted. This was not liked by the people.

*The Sepoy Disaffection* Despite all the causes referred to above, however, the general civil population may not perhaps have mutinied at the time if there had been no mutiny among the Indian soldiers. The sepoys at Meerut mutinied, and killing their officers they reached Delhi where they declared Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of India. Even then it was not before the passage of some time that the civil population got affected by the mutinous spirit.

And so far as the mutinous spirit of the sepoys was concerned, it too had causes to exist. It was the Bengal army which played the dominant role in the mutiny, and this mutiny of the Bengal army was not its first. The Bengal army in fact consisted of the high-caste Hindus—Brahmins, Rajputs and Jats, who not only belonged to Bengal, but the whole of upper India. Though it also included a good number of sturdy Pathans, it belonged mainly to what later was called U.P. and to Oudh.

This army had a brilliant record of service to the British, yet as time passed their chances of promotion got limited. Holmes wrote regarding a sepoy in this army : "Though he might give signs of the military genius of a Hyder, he knew that he could never attain the pay of an English subaltern, and that the rank to which he might attain, after some thirty years of faithful service, would not protect him from the insolent dictation of an ensign fresh from England."<sup>2</sup>

Nor did the Government repose trust in the Indian officers. In every company there were two or three Indian officers who were discharged from service with full pay on retirement, on the pretext of rewarding them. And this was done as soon as they attained a good position of respect : "as soon as Sepoys become attached to them as soon as they encroach upon the admiration and respect which must

1. Ahmed, Sir Syed, *Causes of Indian Revolt*.

2. Holmes, *Indian Mutiny*, p. 49.



be the exclusive property of the European officers...."<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1806, the Madras army mutinied as a result of the new regulations enforced on it, under which the sepoys were forbidden to wear caste-marks on their foreheads, and were ordered to shave off their heads and wear new turbans with leather cockades in place of the old.

There were mutinies at Barrackpur in 1824, and in Assam in 1825 in the Bengal army in the time of Amherst during the Burmese War when the sepoys were compelled to go across the sea to Burma against their caste prejudices, arrange their own carriage for their personal baggages and go to Arakan, a region of plague. These soldiers later hesitated from going to Afghanistan, but when compelled to do so and eat the impure food in that country during the First Afghan War, they objected, though they did not mutiny. On return they had to perform many expiatory ceremonies.

Between 1764 and 1844 these sepoys mutinied for as many as a dozen times, for purely material grievances such as the low rates of pay and allowances. For instance, Bengal regiments refused to march to Sind in 1844, and demanded the restoration of their extra allowances as a condition for doing so. When the Army of occupation was sent to the Punjab in 1849, the mutinous spirit was discernible among these soldiers. In the time of Dalhousie too, mutinies occurred in Sind as well as in Burma. Dalhousie showed his weakness and refused to go to either of the places. And according to the Red Pamphlet: "from that moment a revolt became a mere question of time and opportunity."<sup>2</sup>

The general causes of discontentment which led the sepoys to mutiny earlier and stage a grand mutiny in 1857, were listed by Sheikh Hidayat Ali in a memorandum, the more important of them being: (1) The indignation of the sepoys at the annexation of Oudh to which many of them in the Bengal army belonged. (2) Recruitment of the Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims after the annexation of the Punjab, and the dismissal of many of them later when they refused to abide by the orders which, violating the earlier promises made to them, asked them to remove their beard and hair. (3) The General Service Enlistment Act and the general order in September 1856 asking the new recruits to take an oath to be prepared to go wherever required. Holmes commenting on this remarked that Canning had hoped that the recruitment would not be affected by it, but "being a new-comer, he did not realise that the Bengal army was a brotherhood, in which

1. *ibid.*

2. *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army* (known as the Red Pamphlet), London, 1857, p. 9.



military service was hereditary.”<sup>1</sup>

There were other causes besides the above. The activities of the Christian missionaries were becoming too offensive for the sepoys to bear. Proceedings of one of their schools read: “Some others now engaged in the degrading and polluting worship of idols shall be brought to the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ.”

Then Sir Syed Ahmed Khan refers to a series of letters circulated by Edmond, and written for the public, but particularly for the responsible Indian officers in the army. These letters argued that since India now had one railway system, one telegraph system and one law for whole of the country, she must have one religion, which would best be Christianity. Sir Syed remarked: “These letters so terrified the natives that they were as people struck blind, or from under whose feet the ground had suddenly slipped away.”<sup>2</sup>

Some responsible officers like Major Mackenzie and Colonel Wheeler openly preached Christianity among the sepoys, to which the Government paid no heed. The active Christian propaganda coupled with the passage of the Religious Disabilities Act, confirmed the religious apprehensions in the minds of the sepoys.

Then, the ordinary sepoys enjoyed no respect in the army. The most slanderous language and the most naked abuses were hurled on them, and the “English officer, instead of identifying himself with those under him, sought for interests, pleasures, and society in importation from home.”<sup>3</sup> The only bond between the sepoys “and the Government was his pay and pension, and his pay and prospects were far from attractive.”<sup>4</sup>

In the Bengal army, unlike in Madras and Bombay, promotions were given on seniority basis alone, and there was no retiring age. “The result,” according to Rawlinson, “was that Subedars (highest rank of Indian infantry officer) of 50 years’ service were not uncommon, and many of them were so old and decrepit that they could not keep up with the men on the march.”<sup>5</sup> And the same was true of the British officers as well. Dalhousie himself remarked: “Commanding officers are inefficient, brigadiers are no better; divisional officers are worse than either, because older and more alone; and at the top of all they send a commander-in-chief 70 years

1. Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

2. Ahmed, Sir Syed, *Essay on Causes of Indian Revolt*, translated by W.N. Lees, p. 20, also see Misra, Anand Swarup, *Nana Saheb Peshwa*.

3. *The Sepoy Mutiny* of Henry Knollys compiled from private journals of Gen. Sir Hope Grant.

4. Sen, S.N., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

5. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

old." General Wheeler was actually 75 at the time of the Kanpur disaster.

There was a fear among the Bengal soldiers that a new war-like Sikh regiment would command superior respect and chances. There was a great disparity in number between the Indian and the English soldiers which encouraged them. At the time of the outbreak of mutiny, the whole effective English force all over India numbered only 36,000; while the Indian soldiers numbered as many as 257,000—armed police and lascars attached to artillery which constituted a large number being excluded.<sup>1</sup> Then, "Lord William Bentinck's economy measures," writes Sen, "had caused great discontentment among the European officers and they openly talked of mutiny and this was no secret to the ordinary troops, Indian and European."<sup>2</sup>

The distribution of troops in the country too was faulty, there was no European soldier worth the name either in Bengal or Bihar, except there being a small number of them at Calcutta and Danapur near Patna. The major European force was concentrated far away in the Punjab and elsewhere. The Bengal army alone numbering 151,361 soldiers, they had a confidence in their future.

Not few amongst the Indian soldiers still possessed a deep veneration for the old royal family at Delhi, and that also animated their spirit for action. There was also the hope of plundering the private European property. The centenary of the Battle of Plassey was also to fall in June 1857, and the people had a superstitious belief that the end of the British rule in India had arrived. And last but not least, was the incident of a mysterious circulation of *chapatties*, and a similar circulation of the lotus flowers among the general public and the soldiers respectively. The origin and cause of these has not been known, yet occurring at the opportune moment as they did, they served to increase the general unrest.

And once the mutiny did break out, there were other causes which made their contribution to its sustainment and spread. There were the rumours of the Russian victory against England in the Crimean War. There was an ignorance of the resources and the real power of the English. And the courtiers of the ex-King of Oudh, if not he, did not spare their energy in spreading the disaffection. The King of Delhi also made promises of pay and grants of land. The soldiers disbanded from the army as a result of suspicion roamed about unemployed and added fuel to the mutinous fire.

1. Roberts, P.E., *Modern India*, p. 434.

2. Sen, S.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

*The Immediate Cause.* The immediate cause of the mutiny was the one connected with the greased cartridges. New Enfield rifle had been introduced for the use of the sepoys, for the loading of which the greased cartridges were used, the end of which was to be bitten off by the teeth of the user. There was a rumour that the fat of cows and pigs had been used to grease these cartridges, the object being to defile the Hindus as well as the Muslims. The British Government denied the charge and forced the sepoys to use these cartridges. The sepoys got infuriated and broke out into a mutiny at Barrackpore and later at Berhampore. The decisive mutiny of the sepoys, however, occurred at Meerut on 10 May 1857 when the British authorities acted foolishly by imprisoning the 85 sepoys for their refusal to use the cartridges. Later on it was actually proved that the fat of cows and pigs had been used, of which the British Government were ignorant.

The first shot of the mutiny had however been fired, and the situation could not now be brought back to normal. The regiments which broke out into mutiny at Meerut, murdered many Europeans and marched off to Delhi. The regiments at Delhi also mutinied. The mutineers murdering many Europeans in the capital, occupied the city and put Bahadur Shah the old Mughal Emperor on the throne. Soon the mutiny spread to Lucknow, Bareilly, Kanpur, Agra, Jhansi, Central India, Bundelkhand and many other places. the mutineers killing the Europeans and throwing open the jails.

At Kanpur, the direction of the mutineers was in the hands of Nana Saheb. The British garrison here surrendered, and all but four of them were killed in cold blood. At Jhansi, Rani Laxmibai led the mutineers, and here too many Europeans were put to death. The other Indian leaders were Tantia Tope, Kunwar Singh, Azimulla Khan, Ahmed Shah and Maulvi Ahmed Shah of Fyzabad.

The greatest service to the British during the days of their trouble was rendered by the Punjab almost whole of which remained loyal, with a few exceptions here and there. And the major credit for this goes to its Commissioner Sir John Lawrence who disarmed the disaffected sepoys in time, raised new regiments of the Sikhs and sent them to Delhi to recapture it. Delhi being the heart of India, its capture was essential for the purpose of breaking the backbone of the mutiny. Bahadur Shah was arrested, his two sons were shot dead, and he himself was transported to Rangoon.

At Kanpur, Nana Saheb was defeated by General Havelock who took the city, and then marched off to Lucknow. After his departure, however, Kanpur was recaptured by the mutineers. Havelock entered Lucknow together with Outram, but here they themselves were besieged to be relieved only later by Campbell on 6 December 1857.

Nana Saheb with his Gwalior sepoys was also defeated by Campbell. Tantia Tope, the minister of Nana and a veritable talisman for the mutineers, gave the best account, keeping the British troops running after him for nine months on a distance of three thousand miles. Finally, however, he too fell and with him ended the mutiny.

Such thus were the causes of the mutiny, and such its events in brief. The above account clearly shows that there was no organised movement for independence when the mutiny broke out, and that there was no spirit of nationalism that animated it. Different persons, different princes, the *zamindars* and the sepoys fought for different reasons. Some fought for their lost principalities, others for the lost titles and pensions, while yet others fought for their caste and religion which were in danger. Some fought just for the sake of adventure, while others fought for the love of plunder and booty. There were some common grievances, but none too common to inspire the whole mass of mutineers, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs, the princes, *zamindars* the rich and the poor together. The combustible material lay scattered, and the spark was provided by the sepoy mutiny.

Lord Canning himself wrote to Lord Elphinstone in a letter dated 6 May 1857 : "It is not possible to say with confidence what the causes are, but with the common herd there is a sincere fear for their caste, and a conviction that this has been in danger from the cartridge and other causes...But upon the whole, political animosity does not go for much in the present movement, and certainly does not actuate sepoys in the mass."<sup>1</sup> Mr Edwards, who was the magistrate and Collector of Budaon, the hot centre of mutiny, also commented: "I must solemnly declare my belief that with the mass of our soldiers the dread of these cartridges was the immediate and the most powerful cause of the revolt." The sepoys broke out into mutiny due to their own causes, and the others followed them, but they due to *their* own causes.

We may finally conclude with the words of Thompson and Garratt : "The Mutiny may be considered either as a military revolt, or as a bid for recovery of their property and privileges by dispossessed princes and landlords, or as an attempt to restore the Mughal Empire, or as peasants' war. From every aspect it was localised, restricted and unorganised."<sup>2</sup>

### The Failure

Whatever be the character of the mutiny, it undoubtedly was a great event in the history of the Indian War of Independence. A good part of the nation up in arms; meagre resources

1. Quoted in Kaye *op. cit.*, I, p. 618, f.n.

2. Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 436.

of the British and their as yet difficult means of communication made yet more difficult by the openly hostile people. In fact the circumstances were very favourable for the people, and the British had been taken by surprise. Yet it was a wonder that the mutiny ultimately failed. It would be instructive to make a brief study of the causes of the failure. . .

The first and the foremost cause of the failure of the mutiny, it must be said, was the fact that the whole of India did not participate in the mutiny and those who did participate, had no solidarity among themselves. Those affected by the mutiny were only a part of the Punjab, U.P., Rohilkhand, Oudh, the territories between the Narbada and the Chambal rivers, and western part of Bihar and Bengal, while the territories of Rajputana, Central and Eastern Bengal and those south of the Narbada, all remained undisturbed. Sind was loyal, Dost Muhammad of Afghanistan rendered a loyal assistance, and Nepal in this respect did not remain behind. Not a single ruling chief of some importance joined the mutineers. Large civil population which included the intellectuals as a *class*, remained quiet, firstly, because they as yet completely lacked a national feeling, and secondly, because they had no reason to trust the ruling chiefs for any help. By diplomacy, rewards and threats, the Sikhs were not only kept aloof from the mutineers, they were made to render an important help against them.

Sir W. Russell indeed made a correct appraisal of the situation when he wrote : "Our siege of Delhi would have been quite impossible if the Rajas of Patiala and Jind had not been our friends and if the Sikhs had not remained in our battalions and remained quiet in the Punjab. The Sikhs at Lucknow did good service and in all cases our garrisons were helped, fed and served by the natives, as our armies were attended and strengthened by them in the field."<sup>1</sup>

The Raja of Jind in fact was the first man, European or Native, who took field against the mutineers; marching to Karnal with 800 men and securing supplies to the British. Patiala supplied 5,000 men and 8 guns, Nabha supplied 800 strong, while Kapurthala furnished 2,000. It was the Sikhs under the command of General Nicholson who finally captured Delhi for the British. Gordon wrote : "though the Khalsa has ceased to be a political power, it has entwined its military force with a strong chord of loyalty and sympathy for the British Crown."<sup>2</sup> His Royal Highness Prince Albert Victor of Wales on his visit to Lahore in 1890, called the Punjab "the guard-room of the Eastern Empire"<sup>3</sup> due to the part it played in 1857, but for

1. Russell, Sir W., *My Diary in India*.
2. Gordon, *The Sikhs*, p. 222.
3. *Punjab Administration Report, 1890-91*.

which the history of the mutiny should have been different.

Then, the mutineers had neither a general plan of action, nor any liaison between different groups. Some sort of organisational talent was shown by the leaders like Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, Tantia Tope and Kunwar Singh. But their campaigns were local, and they too failed in having a regular contact with one another. While each of their armies were individually whole, all armies failed anywhere to combine together.

Nor, did the mutineers have an understanding of war strategy. Delhi was the backbone of a power which wanted to rule supreme in India. But while the British understood the psychology and the strategy attached to it, the mutineers absolutely failed in doing so. The first thing the British did was to collect every available soldier and concentrate round Delhi to besiege the Emperor and his troops within. The best thing for the mutineers outside should have been to prevent them from doing so, and attack them from the outside when they did concentrate. But they did neither of these.

The British position in Delhi could be maintained only by a regular and continuous supply of soldiers and arms from the Punjab which was done through a narrow passage which lay along the border of U.P. towards the north-west of the city. The passage lay in the midst of one of the most disaffected parts of the country. Yet it occurred to none to try to block it. Nana Saheb at Kanpur instead of sending the sepoys to do this job, dissuaded the Kanpur troops from doing so. Savarkar tries to justify Nana's action by saying that "the best interests would not be served by shutting up all the available forces in Delhi."<sup>1</sup> But comments Dr Majumdar: "He forgets that what was wanted was to stop the succour coming to the besiegers of Delhi from the Punjab side, and the number of mutinous troops was so large that under proper leadership it should have been possible to cut off the communication between Delhi on the one side and the Punjab and Calcutta on the other."<sup>2</sup> Nana's selfish interests in fact seem to have been confined to Kanpur, and to securing Peshwahood for himself; he being concerned neither with Allahabad, nor Lucknow or Delhi. Nor in the case of Delhi being successful in holding out to the British, was he prepared to play second fiddle to Bahadur Shah.

There was in fact, no towering personality among the leaders of the mutiny who could organise or lead the mutineers on the national perspectives. The so-called leaders and heroes of the mutiny like Nana Saheb were in fact only traitors to the national cause. About Nana Saheb, particularly, the less said the better. Selfish and

1. Savarkar, V.D., *The Indian War of Independence*, p. 220.

2. Majumdar, *Sepoy Mutiny*, p. 271.

incapable Nana Saheb had neither intelligence to plan nor nerve to fight battles on a large-scale. Near Kanpur he yielded a victory to Havelock with the least intelligent and courageous effort to retain it. His effort to dissuade the sepoys from marching to Delhi was not only unwise, but traitorous. Of the most heinous crime of killing the European women and children at Kanpur in cold blood, he could never entirely be absolved. Yet the worst part that he could play was in his repeated letters of appeal which he sent to the British praying for forgiveness and the restoration of his titles and pensions. He wrote to high British officials in a letter: "It is surprising that I who have joined the rebels from helplessness have not been forgiven." The killing of the women and children was done by "your sepoys and *Badmashas* at the time that my soldiers fled from Kanpur."<sup>1</sup>

Tantia Tope, Rani Laxmibai and Kunwar Singh should have been honest after they threw their lot with the mutineers; but none of them had the calibre to conduct a war on a national basis. Bahadur Shah was only a figurehead.

Opposed to these, however were Lawrence, Outram, Havelock, Edwards and Nicholson; not only great soldiers, but also great organisers and planners. Lawrence's success in keeping the Punjab loyal and pacified and making it save an empire for the British, could any day be given the credit of great statesmanship, presence of mind, intelligence and foresightedness.

Nor could the courage and gallantry of the Indians be matched with those of the English. In fact the close study of any action fought between the two shows nothing but half-heartedness and resourcelessness on the part of the Indians, and precisely opposite behaviour on the part of the English. At Hindon, and at Badli-kasrai near Delhi for instance, in the pitched battles fought between the two, neither a superior number of the Indian soldiers nor their superior artillery could give them the necessary courage and morale to win a victory.

Only a few more instances may be quoted to enforce the point. At Kanpur the English sheltered themselves only in an improvised camp, with a weak entrenchment. They had only 400 English fighting men of whom as many as 70 were invalids, and had besides only a small band of faithful sepoys. Opposed to these were the three thousand mutinous sepoys, well trained, well armed, and well fed, assisted by the retainers of Nana Saheb and supported by the sympathies of a large civil population.<sup>2</sup> They, under the leadership of Nana Saheb, besieged the town for twenty days, and yet failed to

1. Majumdar, R.C., *Sepoy Mutiny and Revolt of 1857*.

2. See Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 226.



reduce it; the town ultimately being reduced by Nana only by treachery.

At Jhansi the garrison under the command of the Rani numbered 10,000 Bundelas and Velaitees, and 1,500 sepoys.<sup>1</sup> The town was besieged by Sir Hugh Rose on 22 March 1858 with only 2,000 soldiers. On 31 March Tantia Tope arrived with 20,000 soldiers to relieve the garrison. Sir Hugh, however, leaving only a part of his army behind to continue the siege, attacked and defeated Tantia on 1 April. The latter fled the field hotly pursued by the English. After this Sir Hugh carried a direct assault and entered the fort on 3 April, the Rani stealing away to her safety. Thus the city was captured. Such was the demoralised state of the Indians. Even when the relieving army was engaged with more than half of the small besieging force, it occurred to nobody in the garrison to sally out and destroy the besiegers. Nor could the 20,000 soldiers of Tantia defeat a thousand or little more of the English.

The walled city of Delhi having a large well-equipped army, with a free access to the outside territory and having a strong fortification within, was reduced by the British only in four months. Such are thus the striking instances of the Indian weakness and demoralisation.

And then on the one hand were the British imbued with the spirit of revenge for the murdered women and children. They carried in their breasts, a zeal to retain an empire, a determination to save their national honour and a discipline and fellow-feeling to unite, fight and win. They had no alternative but to win, in which alone lay the possibility of their life. If they fled the field there was no place in India to hide their heads and save life.

While on the other hand the Indians, were fighting more blindly than wisely. The problem of defending their religion having receded into the background, their fight was now animated only by hopes of material gains and a hatred against the British. There was no national ideal to inspire them, and no national zeal to enliven their spirit and unite them all together. To fight in the battle-field was for the majority of them only an expediency, while to flee it and go back to the villages was to go to peace and safety of life.

Nor was the personal character of the Bengal troops a possession to be envied. Pride and arrogance in place of love and fellow-feeling was their trait which could hardly attract others to unified action.

Such being the state of affairs in the Mutiny of 1857, there was

1. *ibid.*, p. 494.



no general appeal to peasants, the tillers and the common man of the nation to join. The main inspiration came from the ruined princes, and ruined title- and pension-holders.

And then, in some parts of the country, as for instance in the Punjab and in Rajputana, some people preferred the disciplined administration of the British, however derogatory to the national economy, to the indisciplined administration of the Indian princes. Sir John Strachey writes : "The duty was once imposed upon me of transferring a number of villages which had long been included in a British district to one of the best governed of the native states. I shall not forget the loud and universal protests of the people against the cruel injustice with which they considered they were being treated."<sup>1</sup>

"The new middle-class created under British rule saw no hope in the 1857 revolt.. They found the representatives of these 'middle classes' in the British rulers and thought it more prudent in their own class-interest to follow them, than to back the wrong 'feudal' horse."<sup>2</sup>

The time-factor too was against the Indians. Luckily for the British the Crimean war was over. Russia was defeated and the Indian rebels were internationally isolated. The only Indian hope lay in their quick victories, lest reinforcements should arrive from England. But thanks to the causes referred to above, the mutineers did not merit even a reinforcement.

Yet, ultimately it must be added that luck favoured the British in more than one cause. And the most important one of them was that the Indian princes sitting on the fence, were bound to join the mutineers if the suppression of the mutiny took just a little time more. Already, attractive offers were being made by Bahadur Shah and other leaders of the mutiny to them. The situation in the Punjab too was not very safe. Fierce tribes here watched a chance to pounce upon the British, 13,000 disarmed sepoy's roamed about creating disaffection, and the large population though faithful, speculated whether the British should go or remain.<sup>3</sup> "If, with the last aid, Delhi were not taken, and that too speedily there could then be a struggle for European existence, within the Punjab."

Lawrence wrote in a Minute dated 19 April 1858 : "Many thoughtful and experienced men now in India believe that it has only been by a series of miracles, that we have been saved from

1. Holmes, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-70.

2. *Rebellion 1857*, A Symposium, p. 117.

3. Chhabra, *History of Punjab*, II, p. 353.

utter ruin."<sup>1</sup>

Be that as it may, the mutiny was suppressed with a heavy and uncompromising hand. But once it was so, Canning was not prepared to witness rabid and rancorous vindictiveness towards the people. For he declared that he did not want to govern in anger. Besides, expediency also required leniency. For it was impossible for a small number of Englishmen to rule over India without the good will of the people and the Indian soldiers. Many princes, *zamindars* and even common people had exhibited friendship towards the British. It was no good to develop unreserved hatred against the brown skin. Canning, therefore, issued a resolution to this effect, forbidding his officers from shedding needless blood, and burning villages which would threaten famine and also deplete revenue resources. Canning was conscious of the danger of racial animosity, and was anxious therefore to speedily bring about settled conditions.

The resolution that was issued carried detailed strictures regarding those who had indulged in violence and murder, but everything was to be done under law and no excess was to be perpetrated. It was well-intentioned and calculated to meet out justice and serve the long term interests of the British in India. But he was miscalculated, and there arose a storm of invective in the press and elsewhere condemning Canning's 'misplaced generosity'. An Indian newspaper termed it "impolitic, and iniquitous... it allows the blood of English and Christian subjects...to flow in torrents, and their wives, sisters, and daughters to be outraged and dishonoured without adequate retribution." *The Times* in London, in a lengthy article, called it the "Clemency of Canning,"<sup>2</sup> and contemptuously demanded if the "humanity and consideration are for the sole benefit of the mutineers..." In another article, *The Times* termed it a "silly proclamation". Other papers like *Punch* and the *Daily News* also made virulent attacks, but Canning remained unmoved and wrote to Grenville, that as "long as I have breath in my body I will pursue no other policy than that which I have been following."<sup>3</sup> Grenville agreed with him, and the Queen also heartily supported this policy.

Canning showed a remarkable calm at a time when exasperation, malice and indiscriminate vindictiveness were in the air. He refused to change his Indian guards for Englishmen, rejected the petition of the White community of Calcutta to impose martial law on the whole of Bengal, and in the midst of rancorous protests appointed Munshi Ameer Ali, a Muslim lawyer, as Deputy Magistrate in the Patna division. Open abuses, violent protests, petitions to the Queen to recall him, none could deflect him from the path that he thought

1. *Punjab Administration Report*, 1856-58.
2. This is how Canning's name got currency as 'Clemency Canning'.
3. MacLagan, Michael, *Clemency Canning*, pp. 132-41.

was right. His services were appreciated in England and he was gazetted GCB and promoted to Earldom in 1859.

As the storm blew over, the time came now also to reward those who rendered a faithful service to the British. The Chief Commissioner of Punjab, John Lawrence, was promoted Lieutenant-Governor. The rulers of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kapurthala, etc. who had done everything to help the British during their days of trouble, were all suitably rewarded. The territories which Nepal had ceded and were bestowed on Oudh in 1815, were returned to Jung Bahadur, the ruler, who was also awarded GCB in the Military division. Soldiers of this independent kingdom had marched during mutiny to Lucknow. Canning himself moved with the Viceregal cortege through Upper India, holding durbars and receiving distinguished and faithful princes at Ambala, Lahore, Peshawar, Sialkot and Simla.

### CHANGES AFTER MUTINY

“The Mutiny cannot be dismissed as an unhappy incident which ended with its suppression,” thus write Thompson and Garratt.<sup>1</sup> There was a complete reorganisation of the internal administration and of the relations with the Indian states; and “the reorganisation after the disturbances of the mutiny furnished an opportunity for transferring control from the company to the Crown in appearance as well as reality,” writes Powell-Price.<sup>2</sup>

### ACT FOR THE BETTER GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The most important result of the mutiny was the Act for the Better Government of India 1858. This Act, in fact, was the termination of a process commenced by the Pitt's India Act in 1784. From 1784, the Crown's hold had slowly developed on the Indian affairs, while the powers of the Court of Directors were progressively curtailed till the Charter Act of 1853 was passed. This act clearly laid down that the Company was to hold the territories and the revenues of India in trust for Her Majesty till it was otherwise provided. The Company's monopoly of trade had already been dissolved and India was thrown open for any Englishman to settle in. The complete transfer of powers from the Company to the Crown in this circumstance could not wait for long.

Nor was the existing dual system of control at Home very conducive to efficiency in the Indian government. There were constant clashes and bitterness between the Court of Directors and the Board of Control entailing unnecessary delay and slothfulness. The thinking minds in India as well as England had already criticised it

1. Thompson and Garratt, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

2. Powell-Price, J.C., *A History of India*, p. 559.

several times and this anomaly had therefore to be removed.

There was a growing belief also that a commercial concern such as the Company was incapable of ruling without self-interest. The Government of a land with a teeming population of millions could hardly be run by an association of merchants whose eyes rested more on profits than on administrative efficiency. Nor could the effects of the industrial revolution and the consequent evolution of liberalism in England go without an impact on the Indian system and life. A generation of liberals was taking birth in that country who believed a system of government with ministerial responsibility was the best. And they could find no consolation until it was introduced in India as in England.

The opportunity for the change came when India was thrown into conflagration by the great Mutiny of 1857. England criticised the system of the Company which was responsible for the great catastrophe involving the lives of hundreds of Englishmen, and a large-scale destruction of life and property of the Indians. The advocates of the direct control of the Crown became more vocal, and when the reorganisation after the mutiny came, "it furnished an opportunity for transferring control from the Company to the Crown in appearance as well as reality."

In the general elections of 1857 Palmerston succeeded and became the Prime Minister. In July of the same year he brought to the notice of the Parliament the evils of the double government, and expressed his desire to take over the Indian administration. The East India Company was alarmed and presented a "Grand Petition," arguing against the proposed step. The petition was very skilfully drawn up by John Stuart Mill, a well-known scholar of the time in the service of the Company, and in it the Company pleaded that if there was anything wrong with the double government, it was introduced by Pitt's India Act of 1784, and therefore it was the Government of England which was to blame. The petition recounted the great services the Company had rendered both to India and to the Crown and mentioned how a great empire had been secured without any cost to the latter. It was asserted that the taking over directly of the Government of India would be attended by many dangers; and that, to "believe that the administration of India would have been free from error, had it been conducted by a Minister of the Crown, without the aid of the Court of Directors, would be to believe that the Minister, with full power to govern India as he pleased has governed ill, because he had the assistance of experienced and responsible advisers." Ross Mangles the Chairman of the Company also expressed a surprise that the existence of the Company was threatened even without a Parliamentary enquiry. He asserted that "an intermediate, non-political and perfectly independent body like the Company was an indispensable necessity for good

### Government in India."

All this, however, failed to convince Palmerston who, introducing in February 1858 a bill for the better government of India, said : "The principle of our political system is that all administrative functions should be accompanied by ministerial responsibility to Parliament, but in this case the chief functions in the Government of India are committed to a body not responsible to Parliament, not appointed by the Crown, but elected by persons who have no more connexion with India than consists in the simple possession of so much India stock." Lord Palmerston's arguments were, however, dressed in a sympathetic language, and he said that the Bill was not intended to condemn or undermine the achievements of the Company, the aim was simply to remove some of the glaring defects in the existing system. Nor did Palmerston agree that the direct take-over would involve any serious dangers from India or elsewhere. The Indian people would rather welcome the change, he said. Some members rather ruthlessly criticised the Company's administration, and among them Sir George Cornwell Lewis was perhaps the most outspoken.

The Bill went through the second reading. But unfortunately before it could become law, Lord Palmerston was defeated on the 'Conspiracy to Murder Bill', and was thrown out of office. Lord Derby with Disraeli as the Chancellor of Exchequer succeeded. A new Bill known as Disraeli's India Bill was introduced. But it was ridiculed by Lord Palmerston and his followers. The matter continued thus, till Stanley introduced yet another Bill, and it was passed as the 'Act for the Better Government of India'.

*Provisions.* The Act which had 75 Sections, declared that India henceforward would be "governed by and in the name of the Queen." Concerning the Home Government, the Act introduced the following changes : (1) The Board of Control and the Court of Directors were replaced by the Secretary of State for India. (2) The Secretary of State was to be assisted by a 'Council of India' consisting of 15 members, 8 of whom would be appointed by the Crown, while the remaining 7 would be elected by the sitting Court of Directors. (3) At least half of these members must have served in India for not less than ten years, and they must not have been away from that country for more than ten years at the time of their appointment. (4) The vacancies among the Crown nominees would be filled up by the Crown ; while among those elected by the Directors, would be filled up by the person co-opted by the Council. (5) The members would continue in office during good behaviour, and would be removed only on petition by both the Houses of the Parliament. (6) Their annual salary would be £1,200 each. (7) The Secretary of State would be a member of the Cabinet, he would sit in the Parliament, and be assisted by a Parliamentary Under Secretary. (8) The Secretary

of State would preside over the meetings of the Council ; and while in some matters such as issuing of securities for money, mortgage or sale of property and appropriation of property and revenue, he would be bound by the majority decisions, in others he would have the powers to overrule the Council's decisions—in which case, however, he himself or any other member of the Council may require that his opinion and arguments be entered in the Minutes of the proceedings. The Council itself had no initiative ; it was only to advise on matters referred to it by the Secretary. (10) The Secretary of State could make rules for the efficient transaction of business by the Council, and he could constitute committees and distribute among them different departments of work. (11) The Council had to meet at least once a week, and its quorum would be of five. Any decision taken in the absence of the Secretary of State, was required to have his written approval. (12) The revenues of India would be used for India alone ; and the salaries of the Secretary of State, and of the Councillors, the cost of the India Office, the East India Company's debts and dividends on its stock, were all to be paid by India. But all the orders of the Secretary of State regarding expenditure and loans, were required to have a concurrence of the majority of the Councillors. (13) All the communications from the Secretary of State to the Governor-General, were to be brought before the Council or were to lie in its room for seven days. If the majority of the Councillors differed with the communication, but the Secretary of State still adhered to it, he had to record reasons why he did so. Certain matters concerning the declaration of a war, making of peace, or negotiations with princes, may, however, be marked secret and not brought before the Council. The Governor-General's despatches concerning these matters could also be kept secret. (14) The patronage was divided between the Secretary of State and the Government of India, as the Act said : all the appointments and promotions, "which by law or under any regulations, usage or customs are not made by any authority in India, shall continue to be made in India by the like authority." The appointments to the covenanted Civil Services were to be made by open competition under the rules laid down by Secretary of State with the help of the Civil Service Commissioners. (15) The Secretary of State was to place every year before the Parliament a report of the Indian accounts, and on the moral and material progress of the country. (16) And finally, the Secretary of State was declared to be a corporate body which could sue and be sued in England and in India.

Relating to the Government of India, the Act declared that (1) the responsibility of the Government of India was to be assumed directly by the Crown, and this assumption was to be declared to the Indian princes by a proclamation of the Queen. (2) All the treaties, contracts and liabilities entered into by the Company were to be binding on the Crown. (3) The Crown would appoint the Governor-General of India and the Governors of the Presidencies. The Lieutenant-

Governors, however, would be appointed by the Governor-General subject to the approval of the Crown; while the members of the various Councils would be appointed by the Secretary of State in Council. (4) The Indian naval and military control was transferred to the Crown; (5) while it was laid down that the Indian finances were not to be expended on military operations outside India without the consent of the Parliament, except for repelling invasion or "sudden and urgent necessity."

*A Review.* There is a considerable significance of the passage of this Act in the history of India. The rule of the Company ended, and now that of the Crown in a direct manner commenced. "The Company," writes Marshman, "transferred to the Crown on relinquishing its functions, an empire more magnificent than Rome."<sup>1</sup> The differences between the Court of Directors on the one hand and the board of Control on the other had made the things too difficult to proceed with. Now both these bodies were replaced by the Secretary of State who was given strong powers to control the affairs of India effectively. This also replaced completely the hold of a body of merchants with that of pure politicians and administrators, and the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office now came into being. The dual government having been abolished and the control having passed entirely into the hands of a member of the British Cabinet, greater possibilities were created for the percolation through this machinery to India of the magnanimity of the new political spirit which was taking its birth in England. The members of the Court of Directors were not essentially those who had visited India, or whose experience of the Indian affairs was unsurpassed. The members of the Board of Control left much to be desired in this respect. The latter body was indeed considered to be a collecting ground for mediocrities. All this was now amended. The Secretary of State was to be assisted by a Council the majority of the members of which were required to have a vast experience in the Indian problems. The announcement of the direct take-over by the Crown was to be made to the princes in a proclamation, and this proclamation was a turning point in the history of the Government of India's relations with the States. This take-over offered an opportunity to the Crown to hold out great promises both to the Indian princes and to the Indian people. While the promises of the non-annexation of their territories to the princes were kept, those to the people for their welfare and uplift were violated, thereby offering a lever for the political agitation of the Indian people. In short the Act closed one chapter of the Indian history and commenced another. New hopes were inspired and new aspirations developed. The Indians had from ages looked upon a living person as an embodiment of sovereign power. The assumption of the Government by the Crown therefore was welcome.

1. Marshman, J.C., *The History of India*, 2 vols.



The changes introduced by the Act, however, seem on a closer examination to be more in form than substance. "The transfer of the Indian Empire to the Crown," writes Ramsay Muir, "involved far less change than might at first sight appear; for the Crown had been steadily increasing its control over the Company's affairs almost since the beginning of its territorial sovereignty." The main rules under which India was governed in 1858, were already those of the British Parliament. The British administrators including the Governor-General though nominally the servants of the Court of Directors, knew that in reality they were answerable to the British Cabinet with its Indian Minister—who was the President of the Board of Control, and through them to the Parliament. From the Regulating Act of 1773, a series of statutes, of 1784, 1793, 1813, 1833 and 1853 had progressively reduced the powers of the Court of Directors till they became just nominal. At first the Company lost its trading monopoly, and then its trading practices were prohibited altogether. The chief officers in India had already become Government nominees, while the rank and file came through the gates of the Haileybury College, the admission to which again was controlled by the Government.

It was in fact a constitutional anachronism that a private corporation had been left in possession of as vast a dominion as India. The Queen had already disapproved of the Company's grant of medals for military service. The Company's system ill-fitted in the English principle of ministerial responsibility. The sovereignty of the Crown was therefore increasingly emphasised by the successive Charter Acts till ultimately it was frankly declared in the Act of 1853 that the Company was to hold the territories and the revenues of India in trust for the Crown till it was determined otherwise. The number of the Directors was reduced from 24 to 18 out of which 6 were to be the nominees of the Crown. The choicest flower in the bunch was indeed taken away when the Directors were deprived of their power of patronage. The result was that the Company now played no real effective part in the machinery of government; "but was only a superfluous fifth wheel; and when...the British Government stood frankly forth as responsible for the welfare of India, it was as if a ventriloquist were to throw aside his absurd doll and speak in his natural voice."<sup>1</sup>

Certain writers have pointed out defects in the Act. Thus, it has been said that the newly formed Council in England was incapable of imposing any check on the Secretary of State's authority. Though on matters referred to it, it could give a valuable advice, it was at best only "a place of repose for the distinguished servants of the Crown after their return from India."<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that the

1. Muir, Ramsay, *The Making of British India*, p. 380.
2. Prasad, Subedar, *A History of Modern India*, p. 279.



Council was given some powers on the Indian revenues and expenditure, but it had no authority on war and peace and the huge expenses involved in it. Certain matters could be kept secret from it, and the Council had no initiative—being empowered to advise only on matters referred to it. The cost of the India Office, the Company's debts and dividends on its stock, and the salaries of the Secretary of State and of the Councillors, were all foisted on India, while for long no Indian member was taken on the Council. It was in fact a business accountancy with a vengeance. The Secretary of State was given large powers. Again, instead "of continuing boldly with the process of sweeping aside moth-eaten pretensions and vicious abuse of power, and thus rallying to her side all the forces of renascent India which she (England) herself called into being," writes Zacharias, "the Government of the day (of Lord Derby) preferred to make terms with the 'dominative' element of old, rather than with the 'political' ones of young India."<sup>1</sup> The princes of the country were recognised, and they were to continue. After the mutiny "the broad tendency was for more and more of the administration to be conducted from London."<sup>2</sup> The India Office in London directly controlled permanent officials in India and hence instead of criticising them identified itself with them and protected them. "These officials, therefore, became the practical owners of India; irremovable, irresponsible, and amenable to no authority but that of their fellow members." Previously under the fear of the renewal of the Charter, the Company did have an inducement to work more efficiently to satisfy the masters in the English Parliament. The Parliament too evinced a keen interest in the Indian problems. But now when the actual charge of India passed into the hands of the Parliament in form as well as reality, its interest slackened, and as Ramsay Macdonald writes, being too much preoccupied in the Irish and other problems, now "held no great debates on Indian questions."<sup>3</sup> Indian Civil Service was the costliest in the world, while on the other hand India was poor. The new officers were arrogant and haughty, and the gulf between the English and the Indians widened. Nor was the provision regarding the use of the Indian revenues very useful to India. These revenues were not to be used on military operations outside India without the consent of the Parliament, except for repelling invasion or "sudden and urgent necessity"—and these last words were very ambiguous.

Yet, the Act occupies an important position in our history inasmuch as it commenced a new era, the significance of which could be realised only in the years to come. The criticism of the weakness of the Council against the Secretary of State seems rather unjustified. The former could not dominate the latter, because he

1. Zacharias, H.C.E., *Renascent India*, p. 92.
2. Dodwell, *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 213.
3. Macdonald, J.R., *Government of India*, p. 263.

represented the opinion of the Cabinet and its domination over him should have signified a domination over the Cabinet thereby subverting the whole constitutional theory of England. The rest of the points of criticism may be important, yet the merits of the Act in the circumstances were greater than its defects.

### THE PROCLAMATION OF THE QUEEN

The next significant development after the mutiny was the proclamation of the Queen which was read out by Lord Canning at a Durbar held on 1 November 1858 at Allahabad. The intentions of the Queen in issuing this proclamation are clear from her criticism of the original draft prepared by Lord Derby. Asking him to re-draft it, she instructed that it should be framed bearing "in mind that it is a female sovereign who speaks to more than a hundred million of Eastern people, on assuming the direct Government over them and after a bloody war, giving them pledges, which her future reign is to redeem, and explaining the principles of her Government. Such a document should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious toleration, and point out the privileges which the Indians will receive in being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and the prosperity following in the train of civilization."

The proclamation of the Queen, which declared the assumption of the Government of India directly by the Crown, marks the beginning of a new era in the history of India. It was a Charter of Rights for the Indians which declared the principles on which this country was to be governed.

After declaring the assumption of the Indian Government, the Queen re-appointed Lord Canning our "well-beloved cousin and councillor Charles John Viscount Canning, do hereby constitute and appoint him, the said Viscount Canning to be our first Viceroy and Governor-General in and over our said territories and to administer the government thereof in our name..." Thus, writes H.V. Lovett: "The chief of the government in India, the man on the spot there, was first styled 'viceroy and governor-general' in the famous proclamation of 1858." "Where the Governor-General is regarded as the representative of the sovereign he is spoken of as Viceroy; where he is referred to as the statutory head of the Government of India he retains his original title."<sup>1</sup>

With the re-appointment of Lord Canning, the proclamation also declared: "We confirm all the civil and military officers employed by the East India Company." And then it went on to declare the

1. Lovett, H.V., *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 226; see also Curzon, *British Government of India*, II, p. 49.

principles of the government policy, which may be broken up as effecting the princes and the people of the country as under.

*The Princes of India.* For the princes of India, the proclamation said : "We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India that all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honourable East India Company are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part." Then : "we desire no extension of our present territorial possession : and while we will permit no aggression upon our dominions or our rights to be attempted with impunity we shall sanction no encroachment on those of others."

And more, it said : "We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of our Native Princes as our own, and we desire that they as well as our own subjects, should enjoy that prosperity, and that social advancement which can be secured by internal peace and good government."

*The People of India.* For the people of India it declared : "We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects..." The proclamation promised non-interference in the religious affairs of the people, and non-discrimination as "...that none be any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith and observances..."

Everybody, young, old, rich or poor, was granted an equal protection of law. Recruitment into services was to be done strictly on merit, as the proclamation said : "...so far as may be our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity only to discharge."

A due protection and respect was to be given to the ancient rights, usages and customs of the people while framing laws. Similarly a full protection would be given in matters of inheritance and the possession of land.

An unconditional pardon and amnesty for the offences committed during the mutiny was to be granted, except in cases where direct part in murdering the British subjects had been taken.

The Queen declared : "...it is our earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry, to promote works of public utility and improvement and to administer its government for the benefit of all our subjects resident therein. In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude best reward."

Commenting on this proclamation, writes Ramsay Muir, "These were no new doctrines : they represented the consistent policy of the Company during at least the preceding generation."<sup>1</sup> But this seems wrong, more so at least with regard to the promises made to the princes. During the preceding generation the policy followed towards them was consistently aggressive, violent and against all treaties and engagements entered into. It was for the first time that the princes were assured of perfect territorial safety. The Doctrine of Lapse which had given the worst shock to their loyalty and faith for the British Government was abolished. And the right of adoption was recognised. Rawlinson therefore writes: "the most fundamental change of attitude was that which the proclamation foreshadowed in the relationship between the British Government and the Indian princes...the princes, therefore, heard with the utmost relief the announcement that their rights, dignity and honour should be respected, and that all treaties made with the Company would be maintained."<sup>2</sup>

The promises to the people, of non-interference in religious beliefs, of equal opportunity for recruitment into services, and of equal protection of law, were also significant. In fact the proclamation was actually, as it was said, the 'Magna Carta of Indian liberties.' "Its only fault indeed," Wilfred Seawan Blunt remarked, "has been that it has never been carried out."<sup>3</sup>

### OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

*The White Mutiny.* The White Mutiny consisted of the mutinous demonstrations of a portion of the European force in the Indian army. Their grievance was that their services could not be transferred to the Crown without their consent, and therefore they should either be granted a fresh bounty money or be discharged from service. The disturbance arose just when Lord Canning completed his tours and pacified the mutinous India. The demonstration of these white soldiers took a serious turn in some cantonments such as those at Meerut and Allahabad. Lord Canning therefore was obliged to grant a discharge from service to those who desired, as a consequence of which the number of the European soldiers in India was depleted by 10,000.

*Army Reconstruction.* The White Mutiny resulted into a serious attention being paid to certain other defects in the army organisation which were forthwith removed. It was decided that henceforward the proportion of the Indians to the European in the army, was not to exceed two to one. An infantry brigade was to consist of one

1. Muir, Ramsay, *The Making of British India*, p. 381.
2. Rawlinson, *The British Achievements in India*, p. 115.
4. Blunt, W.S., *India Under Ripon*, p. 312.

British and two Indian battalions. The Field and other Artillery was to be manned entirely by the Europeans. As a result of all these changes the whole number of the European soldiers in the Indian army became 72,000, while that of the Indians became 135,000.

Another defect removed was the increasing number of the locally recruited European Army, independent of the Home Government. Pitt had been very much conscious of the danger accruing from this, yet he having failed to remove the defect the number of the local European Army increased to about 1/3rd of the European Army in India by 1857. After a lot of controversy in May 1860 the Cabinet decided to amalgamate the two, and in August the same year the legislative sanction of the Parliament was secured which also laid down that in future no European should be recruited for local purpose in India.

The Bengal army, with the exception of a few loyal regiments, had literally been annihilated: 120,000 out of the 128,000 sepoys having been killed in the battle-field, executed or having disappeared. They were now replaced by a new force which consisted chiefly of the Sikhs, the Jats, the Punjabi Muslims, Gurkhas, Baluchis and the other martial races who had proved loyal during the mutiny.

Before the mutiny, the Indian regiments had been divided into two classes, regular and irregular. In the regular units there was a staff of 25 British officers, of whom however only 12 were actually present at a time; the rest being engaged in the civil and other departments, and brought back only when the regiments were ordered into action. The military officers thus engaged in the civil services lost their contact with the military discipline and activities, and after years of flirtation elsewhere when they were brought back to the army they were as unfit for the service as any layman. The results were disastrous.

In 1861, therefore, the Indian army was reorganised on the "Irregular System" in which the previous number of 3 specially selected British officers was raised now to 6, and it was further decided in the same year that every British officer here was to be duly selected and well paid. He was not to be attached to the Indian troops against his will. And he had to pass a test in a *Hindustani* language before he could join the Indian army. The more important feature of the reorganised "Irregular System" of 1861, however, was that Indians, in place of the Europeans, were to be the captains of Troops and the Companies.

As before, there were to be three Presidency Armies, "each with a staff corps which supplied the needs of the Indian regiments as well as officers for staff, political and judicial duties; but with the reorganisation of the civil services, the custom of seconding the best

men for civil employment was no longer necessary.<sup>1</sup> The military police were disbanded and replaced by a civil force."<sup>2</sup>

*The Financial Reforms.* "The mutiny marks the inauguration of a new era in Indian finance," writes Sir H.S. Cunningham.<sup>3</sup> Among the results of the Mutiny were the terrible financial scars which it left on the Indian soil. Villages along the line of march of the armies of Neil and Havelock had been burnt to ashes, and cultivators fled to save their lives. A severe famine broke out in the Agra province in 1861 which destroyed many, and left lakhs of the rest physically weak, less able to work and produce revenue. Kanpur and Lucknow had been gutted, and Delhi was a city of the dead. The revenues were thus depleted; and when the entire cost of the mutiny too was thrown on India, her financial structure was seriously strained. The debt increased by about 40 million sterling. But when a proposal was made to license trade and the professions, there was a storm of objections.

Under these conditions Lord Canning requested the Home authorities for expert advice. James Wilson who had been the Finance Secretary to the Treasury and Vice-President of the Board of Trade, was sent to India in November 1859 as the first Finance Member of the Governor-General's Council.

Wilson after his arrival in this country undertook extensive tours in order to gather first hand knowledge of the existing financial problems. In his budget speech of February 1860, he surveyed the existing financial situation and described it as distressing. He told that a deficit of more than £ 30 million had been added during the three years of mutiny, and that the current year threatened to enhance it yet further by about £ 6½ million. The national debt had increased from 59½ million to as much as 98 million, adding thereby to the annual interest charges by 2 million.

Wilson estimated the gross revenue for 1860-61 at £ 33 million. The main source of revenue, he said, was the land revenue which amounted to about 40 per cent of the total. Next came opium, customs, stamps and salt; and then other sources of revenue.

The custom duties had been enhanced in 1859, which while increasing the revenue had decreased the imports. Moreover they had been hated by the British merchants in India, and Wilson had instructions from the Home authorities to do as much as he could for their satisfaction.

1. For further details see chapter on Lord Lawrence.
2. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
3. Cunningham, Sir H.S., *Earl of Canning*, (Hunter series), p. 198.

Wilson died within a year of his arrival in this country. But before that he had already made his recommendations which were based on two-fold remedy of new taxes and retrenchment. The new taxes proposed by him were three. First was the income tax which was to be imposed at the rate of 5 per cent on an income of Rs 500 a year or more for five years. Second was the Licence Tax on different trades and professions, amounting to one, four or ten rupees a year. And the third was the tax on the Indian grown tobacco which was to correspond with the existing customs duty on the article imported into this country. A uniform import duty of 10 per cent was also proposed.

Among the retrenchments were those in the civil as well as the military expenditures, which were introduced in a drastic manner. For the purpose of watching and controlling the retrenchment in the military expenditure, an efficient machinery was proposed.

Much was also done for the satisfaction of the British merchants in India. The government abolished the export duties on the raw products of this country such as hemp, jute and tea. On the other hand the import duties on the manufactured goods were also reduced to the detriment of the Indian industries. And all this was done under the pretext of free trade.

Such thus was the financial plan of Wilson, which was, however, only partially put into effect. Yet his proposals were considered sound, and formed the basis of the future financial policy of India.

Wilson was succeeded by Laing who had the credit of being the first to discover that "the revenue of India is really buoyant and elastic in an extraordinary degree." Under him the policy of retrenchment in the civil and military expenditure was continued; the former of which saved the Government  $\frac{1}{2}$  million while the latter saved  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million. A paper currency was started, and salt duties were raised.

The most important feature of his financial policy, however, was his inauguration of the system of financial decentralisation which was carried on by his successors more vigorously. It was Laing who first proposed that the local governments should be entrusted with some of the items of taxation, the proceeds from which should be expended by them for local purposes, and should replace the Central assignments. To start with, the taxation on tobacco was entrusted. The best merit of the system was that in place of a tendency towards extravagance, a spirit of economy was introduced in the local governments. And the Centre also saved as much as  $\text{£}1\frac{1}{2}$  million.



"The result of these heroic remedies was that Mr Laing found himself in the enjoyment of a surplus,"<sup>1</sup> which he recommended to be spent, firstly, on the public works and education, secondly, for the purpose of lowering of duties on the Manchester goods, and thirdly for releasing from income-tax the class of lower income up to £ 50 a year.

*The Agricultural Reforms.* Lord Canning also introduced some agricultural reforms, the purpose being to free the cultivators from tedious and troublesome settlements and excessive state demands, and to secure for them the maximum of their hard-earned profits. The most important step was the passage of the Bengal Rent Act in 1859 which gave to the cultivators a fixity of rent and security of tenure, besides obviating some other defects of the Permanent Settlement. Under this Act, a ryot who had held a land for 20 years at the same rent was treated as if holding it since 1793, and was given the rights and privileges accordingly. Occupancy rights were given to tenants who held land for 12 years, and their rent could be enhanced only after an enquiry by a court of law. After this the other provinces also passed rent acts, taking the Bengal Rent Act as a model.

There took place some disputes between the European indigo planters and the Bengal peasantry in 1859 and 1860. As the matter became serious, a commission was appointed to investigate into the matter, which submitted its report. The Secretary of State intervened, and it was ultimately settled that for the non-fulfilment of a civil contract for growing indigo, the tenants would not be subjected to criminal prosecution.

*Education.* The principles to be followed for the educational development in India had been laid down by the Wood's Despatch of 1854. The progress however was slow. The situation was surveyed in 1859, and after some time a plan was chalked out. Under this plan a further impetus was given to the programme of establishing a department of education in every province, with a Director, teaching staff, and inspecting officers. Both primary and the higher education were made to expand. The financial hardship, however, continued, and the rate of progress in the field of education remained slow.

*The Public Works Department.* This Department had been organised by Lord Dalhousie. When peace was restored in the country, and the principles of the Queen's proclamation had to be given effect this department came under the special attention of the Government. Many new works of public utility were taken in hand. Numerous barracks, court houses and bridges were constructed, and vast dams began to rise. The Indian Forest Department was established with

1. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 206.



a conservator of forests and a trained subordinate staff in each division.

**Law and Order.** The problem of law and order in the country was serious. Under the prevailing system the sense of justice and equity in the judges alone was the guiding force to administer justice. Canning thought it essential to regularise the system, which could be done by codifying law. In 1860 therefore, the Indian Penal Code which had been drafted by Macaulay and the first Law Commission in 1837, became law. The Muslim Criminal Code was nullified. And the new Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes were passed.

The judiciary was reorganised by the passage of the Indian High Courts Act of 1861. Under this Act, in place of the Supreme Courts and *adalats* of the English Company, Chartered High Courts were established at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Government were also authorised to establish one more such court, which was established in 1866 at Allahabad, to administer the territories of the North Western Provinces. The Company Sadr-Courts, and Supreme Courts of Presidencies were abolished in 1861; and a due provision for the protection of the European subjects being made in the Criminal Procedure Code, the exclusive jurisdiction of the Supreme Court over them was abolished.

The judges of the High Courts were to be appointed by the Crown, and were to hold office till the pleasure of Her Majesty. The qualification and powers of the judges were also laid down, which remain to guide us even today.

Another great achievement of Lord Canning was reorganisation of the Police Department. An Act was passed in 1861, under which each government got a separate Police Department presided over by an Inspector-General who was to be under the respective local government, and was to be assisted by Deputy Inspector-Generals. A Superintendent of Police was appointed in each district, who was to work in subordination and collaboration with the District Magistrate, and was responsible for maintaining law and order in his area, and for the management and discipline of the police force under him. The division of the district was placed each under a Deputy Inspector, who was to be assisted by a body of constables. The Superintendent of Police and all other police officers above him were to be Europeans whose recruitment was to be done in England.

**Other Changes.** Besides the above, some other administrative tidying up consisted of the creation of the Central Provinces under a Chief Commissioner in 1861. With the territories annexed from Burma after the First Burmese War under Amherst and second Anglo-Burmese War under Dalhousie, British Burma was set up in

1862. Due to the Company's China trade, Singapore and the Straits Settlements had been under the care of the Indian Government. Since the China monopoly had long since ceased to exist, and the East India Company also was now abolished, Canning no more felt the need of keeping under the Indian control such strategic ports and territories. He initiated the matter to get rid of this responsibility, though the ultimate hand-over could take place only later in 1866.

*Famine Relief.* Canning also made an important contribution in the development of the Famine Relief Policy in India. A short history of the earlier developments, and those that took place under him may not be out of place.

Throughout the Company's rule famine remained the "king of terrors" in India. For this is a country which depended too much on the monsoons. The general masses of the country, poverty-stricken and living from hand to mouth, waited only for a signal to fall into the wide-open mouth of starvation. But their misery did not end with this. When the monsoons failed, not only did the crops fail to grow; the grass got burnt by the blazing sun and hot winds of March, April and May; the milch cows began to starve; and the plough and the transport-cattle, the working capital of the cultivators, were decimated; water level fell leaving the meagre supply of it spoiled with noxious germs; and cholera and pestilence followed closely to prey upon the helplessness and physical weakness in the people. The misery was thus complete. Lakhs died and among those who remained, lakhs failed to recover their lost vitality.

Under such conditions, besides the development of the irrigation facilities in this country, if millions of lives were to be saved every year from a miserable death, certain relief policy had to be developed.

During the eighteenth century, not much could be done by the British to revive the country from the horrors of famine calamities. For that was the time when they were still busy in their game of conquests and annexations, and the political diplomacy occupied much of their time. Nor were the means of communication yet properly developed so as to facilitate the transmission of the large quantities of grain at large distances; nor were the agricultural, the vital and the economic statistics readily available and nor had the science yet made it possible to forecast the climatic disturbances. And above all, as the Famine Commission of 1880 remarked: "the position of the British in India was not such as either to create any sense of general obligation to give relief, or to supply sufficient means of affording it."

The famines thus came and ravaged the country. Millions starved and died, but the Government could do nothing more than advance loans for sinking wells, store grain to meet certain emergencies, impose restrictions on the hoarding of grains, and do other odd jobs as the valour of the local and the district officers prompted. There was no national policy worth the name. •

Nor did the conditions change much during the first half of the 19th century. It was for the first time perhaps that at the face of a terrible famine of 1837 in the upper regions of Ganges and Jumna, the local government admitted that the state should find work for the able-bodied, while the infirm and the helpless must be looked after by the whole community as in normal times. Even in the field where the responsibility was admitted, however, not much was done, and a heavy mortality of men, women, children and cattle rendered the whole atmosphere full of wails and woes. There were riots which were suppressed.

The state of the things had not much changed when the mutiny came, and the East India Company was replaced by the Crown. It was only now that a systematic attention began to be given to the problem. Apathetic in the beginning, the Government of the Crown grew mindful later. And as the famines came, famine commissions began to be appointed to suggest measures to enable the Government to meet the monster of the famine more effectively the next time it came. And slowly the famine code matured, till it became helpful and workable and lives began to be saved.

Under the Crown, there was a great expansion in the means of irrigation. The railway lines and the other means of communication began slowly to measure the length and the breadth of this land. Trade and commerce grew, and so did grow the agrarian legislation for the cultivators' protection. The gradual change in the economic factors modified the very character of the famines, and this was one of the problems which every famine commission, as it was appointed, was called upon to face, and make its recommendations to suit the circumstance.

It goes to the credit of Canning, that the first famine commission came during his time in 1860 when in that year the monsoons failed and an area of 48,000 square miles, including Alwar, the North-West Provinces around Agra, and several other territories suffered a terrible famine. Over half a million of the people in the affected area left their homes. Luckily, the south-eastern districts of the North-West Provinces had plenty of rains, the East India Railways had considerably spread to help in bringing succour, and within the affected area also about 900,000 acres more of the land had since 1837 been brought under protection. The old policy of 1837 was repeated, and the Government made efforts to provide work to the

able-bodied, leaving the infirm to be looked after by the society ; though the latter source having failed, here also the Government had to take up the responsibility itself. About 80,000 people were given relief through 26 central and 75 district relief houses.

It was for the first time that the Government decided to institute an enquiry into the matter, and Colonel Baird Smith was appointed for the purpose. Colonel Smith submitted his report, but it was unfortunate that this time no efforts were made to formulate any general principles for later guidance. Yet a start towards the direction was made, and the next commission of enquiry appointed in 1866-67 was able to take steps towards the evolution of a famine code which ultimately emerged as the result of the labour of several such commissions. In the meanwhile during three years ending in 1861, Canning added 8,316 miles of new railway lines which considerably helped in the distribution of relief.

### THE INDIAN COUNCILS ACT 1861

This was another great achievement of the reign of Canning in India. Between 1833 and 1861 in England, writes John Coatman, the "Chartist Movement had brought the revolutionary spirit of the Continent into our politics and had made it clear that political power would have to be extended from the upper and middle classes to at any rate the town workers, and the whole movement had quickened and strengthened the natural British instinct for free and democratic Government. This in turn worked powerfully in support of the movement of autonomy in the British colonies."<sup>1</sup> In India there was a strong feeling that when very far-reaching changes had been introduced at Home by the Government of India Act 1858, certain changes according to the circumstances were necessary in the Government of India as well. And it was lucky that the great liberal reformers of England like Gladstone, while anxious to extend democratic elements in England, were no less anxious to satisfy the Indian aspirations as well, though to a limited extent. Nor was it now possible to bear, as Sir Bartle Frere wrote in his Minute of 1860, "the perilous experiment of continuing to legislate for millions with few means of knowing except by rebellion whether the laws suit them or not." The Mutiny of 1857 had clearly brought forth that if the public feeling in India had been properly gauged, and if certain means had been adopted to take regular counsel with Indians, much of the trouble that the British faced in 1857 could have been avoided. After the Mutiny the racial bitterness between the Indians and the Europeans developed at a fast pace. The Indians had no representation in the Legislative Councils wherefrom to exhibit their aspirations, and Sir Charles Wood in his speech in the Commons on 6 June 1861 aptly remarked : "it would be folly to

1. Coatman, John, *India, The Road to Self-Government*, pp. 20-22.

shut our eyes to the increasing difficulties of our position in India, and it is an additional reason why we should make the earliest endeavour to put all our institutions on the soundest possible foundations."

There was yet another reason which necessitated a reform. The Charter Act of 1833, as we have seen, had centralised legislation which made utterly difficult for things to proceed smoothly. India was a vast country, the legislative problems of which could not be understood by a few members of the Central Government quite far away from the people whose destiny they tried to control. Nor had these members the will or the time to seek out certain common legislative standards applicable to all the parts of the country.

The working of the existing Legislative Council set up by the Act of 1853 was also supposed to be unsatisfactory. "The Council," writes Sir H.V. Lovett, "was working as a board and deciding all questions by a majority vote, the Governor-General possessing an overruling power in matters of grave importance."<sup>1</sup> Lord Canning was dissatisfied with this collective business. Nor was the Council ever intended to become an Anglo-Indian House of Commons. Yet this is what it actually became in its legislative capacity. It adopted Parliamentary formalities such as three readings and reference to committees, etc. which all caused delay. There were as many as 136 standing orders to regulate the proceedings of a dozen members of the Council. Trying to act as an independent legislature, it sometimes stopped supplies and did not work entirely according to the wishes of the Home Government. Sometimes the members of the Council insisted on getting information on secret matters and asked questions which could not be replied. All this the authorities desired to correct. Such thus were the circumstances under which the Councils Act of 1861 was passed.

*Executive Provisions.* In its provisions the Act introduced certain changes in the Viceroy's Executive Council. In 1853 a Legal Member had been added to the Council who became its fourth member. Disorganisation of finances after the mutiny, necessitated a change, and the Legal Member was replaced by a trained financier. A jurist, however, was no less urgently needed, "as the law was in process of codification, and even the Penal Code, which had originally been drafted by Macaulay, was still incomplete."<sup>2</sup> So the Act of 1861 added to the Council the fifth required member. The Act also empowered the Secretary of State to appoint the Commander-in-Chief as the extraordinary member of the Council; while of the five above referred to, three were required to have served the Crown or the Company in India for not less than ten years. One

1. Lovett, Sir H. Verney. *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 226.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 226-240.

of the five was to be a Military Member who would be a distinguished soldier. The other two were to be civil servants, the fourth was to be a financial expert who might or might not have served the Crown or the Company previously, while the fifth was to be a Legal Member who would be a barrister of England or Ireland, or a member of the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland of at least five years' standing." The Commander-in-Chief "might be, and in practice always was, an extraordinary member who divided with the military member the responsibility for the military administration of the country."

Every ordinary member was to be assisted by a secretary and under-secretaries, and he was to have a full office establishment at his disposal.

The powers of the Governor-General were increased, and he was now authorised to act alone in all matters except the making of law. The Governor-General was also empowered to appoint a President who would preside over the meetings of the Council in his absence. He could make rules for the convenient transaction of business by the Council, and all acts done or orders passed under these rules were to be known as the acts or orders of the Governor-General in Council. Almost the first thing Lord Canning did under these powers was to stop the clumsy system of the exchange between the members of the boxes containing papers. He rather, by making certain new rules, created certain portfolios or departments of work and distributed them among the members, empowering them to dispose of unimportant business of their respective departments themselves, while placing the important matters before the Viceroy with the views of the member in charge. If the Viceroy differed with these views, the matter was to be brought before the Council where the President would have a casting vote. "Thus the Government of India," as Lovett writes, "became a cabinet government presided over by a Governor-General, being carried on departmentally and the Governor-General taking a more active and particular share in it than is taken by a prime minister in a western country or than had been taken by any of his predecessors."<sup>1</sup>

*Central Legislature.* For purposes of legislation, the Viceroy's Executive Council was expanded by an addition of not less than 6 and not more than 12 members who would be nominated by the Governor-General and would hold office for two years. Not less than half of these members were to be non-official. The old provincial representatives as introduced by the Charter Act of 1853, were sent back. Sir A.H. Layard in the Commons desired that a specific mention should be made that all the additional members would be Indians. But the Secretary of State replied that no such

1. See Lovett, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-30.

mention could be made, as that would make statutory distinction between Her Majesty's subjects of different classes, though some of these additional members were bound to be Indians. It was thus provided that the additional members were to be either Indian or European. With these additional members the Viceroy's Council formed the Indian Legislature.

The Legislative Council thus constituted could legislate on all subjects, covering all people—the British and the British Indian subjects—and the public servants inside and outside India ; with the exception that for the introduction of a measure affecting any one of the following subjects, the previous sanction of the Governor-General was necessary. These subjects were : relations with the Indian states or with foreign powers, religion of a class or religious usages, public debt or the Indian revenue and the maintenance of discipline in the naval and the military forces. The Central Legislature could also enact for any part of India. But for the validity of any law the assent of the Governor-General was necessary, after which it was to be sent to the Secretary of State who could refuse his sanction. The Governor-General had wide legislative powers. He had an absolute veto in matters which in his opinion affected peace and British safety in India. He could alter or revoke any law passed by a provincial government, and could alter the boundaries of the provinces and the Presidencies. He was empowered to issue in emergency an ordinance which could remain in force for six months, except in case it was withdrawn earlier by the Secretary of State to whom the intimation regarding the causes of this step would be sent in due time. Nor were the Governor-General's legislative powers to affect the authority and the enactments of the British Parliament. The rules and regulations sanctioned by the executive orders of the Governor-General for the lately annexed or non-regulation provinces, were made valid by an additional clause.

Thus as it is obvious, the powers of the Central Legislature were seriously curtailed, which now more or less amounted to a registration of the laws which the executive proposed. In great many cases previous sanction of the Governor-General for the introduction of a legislation was needed. No law could be passed which infringed the authority of the Home Government, or which violated any provision of a Parliamentary Act. The Acts passed by it could be disallowed by the Crown, and the Governor-General was also given the powers to issue an ordinance, or veto any of its measures. Thus, it "ceased to exercise and control or check upon the Executive, and even its legislative functions were circumscribed by too many restrictions."<sup>1</sup>

Still, however, there were certain merits in these provisions.

1. Majumdar and others, *Advanced History of India*, p. 852.



Indians were now admitted into higher Councils of the Government, and the Government of India, was given a framework which has been retained even till now.

*Provincial Legislatures.* The provision relating to the provincial legislatures restored the legislative powers of the provinces of Madras and Bombay. For purposes of legislation the Executive Council of a Governor was enlarged by an addition of not less than 4 and not more than 8 members. These members were to be nominated, and not less than half their number were to be non-official. The Advocate-General of a Presidency could also be nominated by the Governor. The additional members were to hold office for two years, and they were to be summoned in all meetings called for the purposes of legislation. The Governor-General was empowered to establish similar legislative councils in other provinces as well; and Bengal thus had its council in 1862, the North-West Provinces in 1886 and Punjab and Burma in 1898. The powers of these legislative councils were however, limited. Previous sanction of the Governor-General was, for instance, needed for the introduction of legislation concerning certain subjects. And no Bill could become a law without his final consent. A provincial council could enact for the good government of the province, but the subjects of national importance such as Post and Telegraph, Coinage, Foreign Relations, Army, etc. were outside its jurisdiction.

Such thus were the provisions of the Act. Sir Bartle Frere and Sir Sayad Ahmad Khan's desire was fulfilled, and the non-officials were associated to help the Government to understand the Indian problems, and to enable the Indians to ventilate their grievances. The Act restored legislative powers to the Governments of Bombay and Madras, and provided for the establishment of legislatures in other provinces. This made a start towards legislative devolution which ultimately resulted in complete provincial autonomy. The portfolio system relieved the Governor-General of routine business, enabling him to employ himself in more important works. The Charter Act of 1853 had given the Governor-General all powers except legislative, but the authority to issue ordinances gave him this power as well, and made him very strong, permitting him to regulate his own business. The ordinances, the portfolios, etc. laid the foundations of the present system, and as Coatman writes, "the whole effect of the Councils Act was to direct the political development of India towards the goal of democratic government by a representative legislature."<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that there were certain defects in the Act. The ex-officio and the official members being too powerful and in majority, the part of the non-officials could only be insignificant. Nor did the non-officials represent people or understand their problems; they

1. Coatman, *op. cit.*, p. 22.



being either princes or big *zamindars*. They had absolutely no attraction for membership of the Councils, and hence, as K.V. Punniiah comments, the "offers of seats in the Council were often declined and the members who were nominated showed the utmost reluctance to come and utmost hurry to depart."<sup>1</sup> Nor could the Councils themselves be called true legislatures either in composition or in functions. The Central and the Provincial Councils could discuss legislation immediately at issue, they could not call for information, nor could they impugn the administrative acts. Their laws merely represented Government wishes, they themselves acting only as "durbars which Indian rulers had traditionally held in order to sound their subjects' opinion."<sup>2</sup>

But then, this alone was the purpose of the creation of these Councils—to ascertain the public opinion and to secure the means to defend and justify the Government legislation. Publicity, information and discussion was the aim, and this aim to a limited extent the Act secured; laying at the same time the foundations of that system which the future Indian generations were to secure.

*Sikkim.* A few words regarding a small expedition to the small independent Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim before we sum up Canning's achievements after the Mutiny. The British had not been keeping good relations with this tiny state the ruler of which was said to be too provocative. In November 1860 Dr A. Campbell's march into the territory with only 160 men was smartly defeated. An expedition of 2,600 men was thereafter despatched, which achieved complete success. No territory was annexed, but the peace treaty secured an indemnity of Rs 7,000, a road into the kingdom was to be built and the British secured some commercial facilities in the state.

Thus, as it is clear, the effects of the Mutiny were great and far-reaching. The Crown assumed the direct administration of India which however, was only formal,<sup>3</sup> the Indian Army was completely reorganised, there was a great change in the policy towards the Indian states, and there were changes in the financial administration, agriculture, education, Public Works Department and the machinery connected with law and order in the country. Great constitutional changes took place as a result of the Government of India Act, 1858 and the Indian Councils Act, 1861.

"One indirect effect of the Mutiny is clearly seen in the birth and rise of extremism in Indian politics."<sup>4</sup> Russel, the Times' Correspondent in India observed in his diary : "the mutinies have produced too much hatred and ill-feeling between the two races to render any

1. Punniiah, K.V., *Constitutional History of India*, p. 104.

2. See Coupland, R., *Indian Problem*, p. 56.

3. See above, discussion of the Act of 1858.

4. Majumdar and others, *Advanced History of India*, p. 782.

mere change of the rulers a remedy for the evils which effect India, of which those angry sentiments are the most serious exposition." The British unlike any previous invaders," write Thompson and Garratt, "became more aloof the longer they stayed, more foreign, more efficient."<sup>1</sup>

*Retirement.* Lord Canning retired from India on 18 March 1862 broken-hearted, as his wife had died at Calcutta a few months before. Reaching England, he himself died on 17 June the same year, leaving behind none to succeed to his titles. "Seldom in the annals of the Indian Empire," writes Rawlinson, "has any man been called upon to shoulder a heavier burden; his biographer relates that he sometimes worked without a break from midnight to midday until his pen literally fell from hand."<sup>2</sup> "He plunged eagerly into business," Cunningham writes, "and commenced from the outset the neglect of all considerations for health which he continued to the end with such disastrous effect." And indeed, all our praise goes for the "serene and resolute mood, the unbroken nerve, the firm justice, the loftiness of soul, with which Canning, rising nobly to the duties of a foremost post in an eventful epoch, piloted his country's fortunes in that dark hour across that tempest-driven sea."<sup>3</sup>

Lord Canning won laurels alike in war and peace. The resolute manner in which he fought against the storms of mutiny, deserve a credit indeed. But a greater credit goes to him due to the fact that once the peace was restored after the mutiny, he applied himself to the reconstruction of the country with a calm and serene mind which is the possession only of highly evolved souls. When there was a criticism of this policy, he wrote to Lord Grenville: "I don't want you to....do more than defend me against unfair or mistaken attack. But do 'take up and assert boldly that, whilst we are prepared, as the first duty of all, to strike down resistance without mercy, wherever it shows itself, we acknowledge that, resistance over, deliberate justice and calm patient reason are to resume their way; that we are not going, either in anger from indolence, to punish wholesale, whether by wholesale hanging or burnings, or by the less violent but not one jot less offensive course of refusing the trust and countenance and favour and honour to any man because he is of a class or creed."

There was a persistent demand after the Mutiny, that he should be recalled. He reacted in a firm manner and wrote to the Home authorities: "I believe that a change in the head of the Government of India at this time....would seriously retard the pacification of the country." And regarding any change in his policy, he remarked: "No taunts or sarcasm, come from what quarter they may, will turn

1. T. and G., *op. cit.*, p. 412.

2. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

3. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

me from the path which I believe to be that of my public duty.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was Canning, kind-hearted, yet firm, and considerate yet merciless where the safety of the empire was involved. Rawlinson wrote : “England has always freely given of her best to India, and in that.... George Canning..... holds an honoured place.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

## Sir John Lawrence, 1864-1869

Born on 4 March 1811, John Laird Mair Lawrence was the eighth child of Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Lawrence by Catherine Letitia, who was daughter of Rev. George Knox. He got his education in several schools, nowhere making a mark. He studied at the Foyle College in Londonderry, was offered Writership by the East India Company in 1827, and after getting two years' training at Haileybury, he embarked for Calcutta in 1829, accompanied by his elder brother, Henry, who was also in the Company's service.

In India he served in several positions, first at Delhi, where he was assistant to the Resident. Later he became Collector and Magistrate at Panipat and Gurgaon, then a Settlement Officer at Etawah, and thus collected varied experience as an administrator, judge, revenue officer, etc. In 1840 he took furlough and went back to England. "He had passed through all the grades of the young civilian; without any help from birth or fortune, he had risen steadily in these ten years and made a name."<sup>1</sup>

While in Ireland, Lawrence married, in August 1842, Harriet Catherine Hamilton, the daughter of a clergyman, in whom he found everything that a man could hope for, as he wrote thirty years later. He then returned to India and was appointed First Civil judge, then Magistrate and Collector in Delhi. Governor-General Lord Hardinge was impressed by his abilities and after the First Sikh War in 1846, he appointed him Commissioner of the Jullunder Doab which had been annexed from the Punjab. "Here he enforced his three commandments: 'Thou shalt not burn thy widows'; 'Thou shalt not kill thy daughter'; 'Thou shalt not bury alive thy lepers'."<sup>1</sup> When the remaining parts of the Punjab were annexed after the Second Sikh War in 1849, John was appointed a member of the Board of Administration in that province. His

1. Gilliat, Edward, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

elder brother Henry was the Chairman of this Board. Henry, however, was a man of independent nature, while John supported everything that the Governor-General Dalhousie thought good. Little wonder when the Board was abolished in 1853, John was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. In 1856 he was knighted and given K.C.B. While as Chief Commissioner he gave a brilliant account of himself and when the Mutiny of 1857 came, he not only kept the Punjab loyal, but also sent "elephants, camels, bullocks, carts, money to pay the troops, sand-bags, saddles, tents,"<sup>2</sup> soldiers—in short everything that was needed in Delhi to recapture it from the mutineers, and thus saved the British Empire in India. In 1859 he sailed for England where several honours were conferred on him. He was also made a member of the newly constituted Indian Council and the Directors granted him an annuity of £ 2,000 whenever he would retire from service.

In the meanwhile in India, Lord Canning was succeeded by Lord Elgin, "a sagacious, industrious, cheerful man," as Curzon called him. He had had sufficient administrative experience in Canada before he was appointed as the Governor-General of India. In India he continued the constructive activities of Lord Canning. To impress upon the people the magnificence of the British empire, he held many *Darbars* at Ambala, Agra, Kanpur and Banaras. The army expenditure was cut down, and no new taxes were imposed upon the people. In his time Wahabis, a fanatical Muslim sect of the North-West Frontiers, raised some troubles, but they were crushed. Unfortunately Lord Elgin's life in India proved to be very short. He died at Dharmasala after only 18 months of his rule. Lawrence succeeded him though he had earlier declined the offer of Governorship of Bombay. Sir John Lawrence arrived at Calcutta in January 1864 to assume the charge of the Viceroyalty and the Governor-Generalship of India.

### INTERNAL REFORMS

Lawrence's period of Viceroyalty was a success in almost all fields of activity, internal as well as external. His internal administration may first be examined.

*Military Reforms.* We have already seen as to how after the Mutiny the army had to be reorganised to face such an eventuality if it occurred again. The artillery was put entirely under the control of the Europeans, and the ratio of the Indians to the Europeans, and the army was decided to be two to one. The next precaution which had been recommended by a Commission in 1858, of which Lawrence himself was a member, was : "As we cannot do without a large

1. *ibid.*, p. 243.

2. *ibid.*, p. 252.

native army in India, our main object is to make that army safe : and next to the grand counterpoise of a sufficient European force, comes the counterpoise of natives against natives." This proposal, however, was left to Lawrence himself to carry out when he became the Governor-General.

The policy of the "counterpoise of natives against natives," was inaugurated under Lawrence, when the Secretary of State Sir Charles Wood approved of the following classification in Indian troops: (1) A national or class system, as in the case of the Gorkha regiments, wherein all the men of a regiment were to be of the same province, race or creed. This system of classification was however to be an exception rather than rule. (2) provincial system, under which the men of the same province but of different creeds and races were to be placed together. (3) the mixed class system, wherein the men from different provinces, races, classes and creeds were to be placed together.

Further, it was decided that the Indian soldiers were to be employed only where absolutely necessary. No implicit reliance was to be placed on any race or class, and they were to be employed as required in due proportion. These soldiers were to be officered only by those whom they liked. And a constant movement of the troops to the different parts of the country was to be discouraged, for it developed acquaintances which "gradually become a kind of brotherhood."

A controversy arose whether the Indians in the army should be supplied with precision arms. Though the majority of the European military officers favoured the Indians to be equipped with better weapons and proposed that there should be no discrimination in this regard, Sir John himself, for certain political reasons, held a different view,<sup>1</sup> which he forwarded together with those of the others to the Secretary of State proposing that the Native army be gradually armed with Enfield rifles, and not with the breech-loading rifle which was much superior. The Secretary of State, however, favoured the opinion of the officers, and declared that the men in the field must have a "confidence in their comrades, confidence in their officers and above all, confidence in themselves." "Men sent into action, knowing that they have inferior weapons, must have their confidence impaired." And therefore, no ban should be laid upon the arming of Native troops as such, with the best available arms of precision."<sup>2</sup>

As already discussed, in 1861 a Staff Corps was established with each of the three Presidency Armies which supplied the needs of the Indian army and Civil employments in Survey, Political and other

1. See Mily Progs; April 1868; No. 418, Lawrence's Minute, 18 April.

2. Mily, Despatch of Argyll, 25 Feb. 1869, No. 51.

departments; as also of the non-regular and frontier provinces. Supply of officers from the British regiments was stopped, and promotions in the Corps were done not on the basis of a vacancy but on the length of service; with the result that the emoluments of these unneeded officers increased, increasing thereby the burden on the revenues.

John Lawrence tried to correct the situation by inducing the officers to retire on enhanced pensions. But his scheme was rejected by the Secretary of State who wrote : "It appears scarcely consistent with sound policy to create a body of officers, and to hold out inducements to them to enter and qualify for a special service and then to frame subsidiary regulations with the avowed object of inducing them to retire at a time when their services are most valuable."<sup>1</sup>

*Police Reforms.* Some police reforms were also attempted. For a long time before the mutiny, the magistrates had, besides handling the district work, also been doing the oversight of police which increased their work, making them judicial officers with extended powers. A reform towards this direction had already been initiated before the mutiny, which was completed by the Act of 6 September 1859 and the Police Act of 1861, thus severing the executive from the judicial functions. Lawrence, however, being a lover of the concentration of powers, wanted to reverse this process. Police Commission of North-Western Provinces (U.P.) in 1863 expressed itself in favour of this, and taking the opportunity Lawrence invited the opinion of the different Governors on the subject. The Governors however, differed with Lawrence, and the latter had to drop his plans.

There was, however, another defect in the Police organisations as supposed by Lawrence, which was removed. The police officers originally employed in the army brought a military spirit in the police, which was not always conducive to the development of efficiency. Lawrence wanted to check this practice and reduce the number of such officers. Despite opposition, he passed a Resolution on 3 August 1867 under which it was laid down that police officers henceforward would be recruited from the uncovenanted service (Indian and European), the Indian element in the higher ranks was to be increased, and it was declared that the local knowledge of the native state servants was essential for the police officers, which was to be kept in view at the time of their recruitment.

*Economy and Finance.* John Lawrence championed the interests of the peasantry against those of the landed aristocracy, and showed a considerable keenness in their advancement. The Punjab Tenancy Act which is known as the "bulwark and a charter of a contented peasantry," was passed in 1868, by which, in certain cases, a recognition was given to the occupancy rights of the tenants. In the same

1. *ibid.*, 11 March 1869, No. 131.

year the Oudh Tenancy Act was also passed which granted occupancy rights at fair rent to 1/5 of the ryots of that state.

There were some defects in the salt duties which had to be removed. Brandon had pointed out in his report of 15 July 1867 that since the stoppage of the salt manufacture in Oudh, its consumption in the state had decreased; about half of its population used salt in a quantity considerably insufficient for health. The cattle used much less than required.

There was yet another defect. The salt duties in Bengal, Bihar and Madras were unequal to such an extent that the prices of salt in Bengal were sometimes double to four times those obtaining in the other presidencies; and were very considerably higher than the production prices. Though opposed by a majority of the members of his Council, in his despatch to the Secretary of State John Lawrence proposed a reduction of the duty on salt in Bengal, and its increase in Bombay and Madras. He proposed certain other reforms as well. Yet, however, no reformatory step could be taken during his time, though immediately after him these defects began to be removed, and completely ceased to exist by 1879.

*Customs Duties.* The disorganisation of finances due to Mutiny had led the Government to reverse the English Company's policy of low rates of duty on imports as well as exports. The policy of high rates, however, was not carried too long; only a short time afterwards the progressive lowering of the duties having been undertaken. This policy of progressively lowering the duties was continued in the time of Lawrence. In 1864, thus, the 10 per cent import duty *ad valorem* was reduced to 7½ per cent; and the 20 per cent special import duty on tobacco was reduced to 10 per cent.

Another reform was introduced in 1867 as a result of the efforts of Massay. Instead of listing certain articles which should be free of duty and leaving the rest subject to duty the practice was reversed, and now those articles began to be listed which were subject to duty, leaving the rest free. As a result of this the tariff system was very much simplified.

*Stamp Duties.* A commission was appointed for the purpose of revising the stamp duties. It submitted its report in 1866, and its recommendations being accepted the following changes were introduced. It was decided that the stamp duty on a suit coming into court would not now be less than one rupee. The duty was to be 10 per cent upto 1,000 rupees value of the suit, and it was to gradually decrease as the value increased. And lastly, the complaints brought before the criminal courts exempted from duty in 1861, began to be charged again.



***The Opium Revenue.*** Right from the year 1860, since the institution of the Indian Budget System, the wide fluctuations in the opium revenue had seriously hampered the forming of proper budget estimates. It was essential that Bengal should supply a fixed quantity of opium so that on the one hand it did not cause undue competition in China where it was consumed, and on the other hand it did not affect the Malwa opium adversely; at the same time, so that it may help in forming an approximate estimate of revenue.

Lawrence took the steps, and to steady the price of the Bengal opium, and to serve the above mentioned purposes, he fixed 45,000 chests as the standard provision by Bengal for an annual sale. Secondly, he supported the proposal of Temple for forming an Opium Reserve Fund, so that the formation of the budget estimates may not be unduly hampered. This second proposal, however, was opposed by the Viceroy's Executive Council, and rejected by the Secretary of State. The latter, while arguing against the proposal in his letter to the Viceroy's, asserted that the opium revenues could not be much relied upon, as they came from China, and could be stopped at any time as a result of some social upheaval, or a competition in that country. Moreover, he wrote, the proposed Opium Reserve Fund would represent a sinking fund, the defects of which were well known. The argument of the Executive Council was that the creation of a reserve fund would entail an unnecessary additional taxation at a time when actually there was no deficiency. And besides it held that the tendency of the opium revenues being already towards the increase, there was no need of taking any desperate view of the situation. Due to these reasons, therefore, the second proposal had to be dropped.

***The Licence Tax.*** John Lawrence had to face certain serious financial troubles. He required about ten million sterling for a scheme of housing and lodging the European army in India. And for this, he proposed to renew the Income Tax on an income group which had been introduced by Wilson in 1860, but had been remitted in 1862. His proposal of the renewal of the Income Tax however, was opposed by his Council, which also opposed likewise, his proposal to impose duties on certain articles of export.

Being thus checked in his designs, the next year he brought yet another proposal before the Council and prevailed upon it to accept. Under the new proposal a modified Income Tax was sought to be imposed in the shape of Licence Tax. Despite a serious opposition from the rich European and the Indian community both inside and outside India, the Legislative Council at Calcutta converted the measure into law in 1867. Another measure, called Certificate Tax, was passed in 1868; and thus, the financial purpose of John Lawrence was served.

These new taxes were assessed on almost all incomes, except those derived from public funds and lands. Under them moderate duties were imposed upon the professional and trading classes. The assessment, which commenced at a yearly income of Rs 200, and terminated at Rs 10,000, divided the people between these two extremes into five income groups. In each group the maximum assessment was two per cent which was calculated on the lowest estimated income of that group. Obviously thus, these taxes were nothing but income tax, though not so in name.

Temple writes that the licence tax was, "he knew, inferior to a scientific income-tax, in as much as it failed in touching all the rich; still it did touch the well-to-do middle class, heretofore almost exempt from taxation, and that was something."<sup>1</sup>

*The Second Famine Commission.* The Orissa famine of 1866-67, so called because of its severity in that state was a turning point in the process of the formation of the famine code in India. For much of the misery that came to Orissa in that year, it was the local government itself which was to blame. There had been a failure in the autumn rain which resulted in the reduction of the rice crop of 1865 to one third. "In April 1866," wrote Campbell "the magistrate of Cuttack still reported that there was no ground for serious apprehension. A few days later in May, he and his followers were almost starved." Panic set in all around, the grain dealers withheld the supply, and before the irresponsible and careless government officials could plan an importation, monsoons set in and deluged the country. All the passages for importation and succour were lost, and it was not before October that the Government officials could stir and when relief came. About £1½ million was spent, yet the rough estimates as could at that time be drawn, showed that about one-fourth of the population lost their lives.

The Campbell Commission was appointed by Lawrence which blamed the Government of Bengal in having failed to forecast the misery, in having relied blindly on the law of demand and supply, and in having failed to understand that during the rainy season Orissa was cut off from the rest of the country from all sides. The Commission recommended that (1) it was necessary for the officials to be more cautious and careful with regard to the above points for the future. "The idea rather prevailed," the Commission said, "that the Orissa famine was a personal failure which need not occur again." Besides, the Commission recommended that (2) the province should start the maintenance of proper agricultural statistics and land records; and that (3) the means of communication and transmission should be considerably improved.

1. Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 163; See Dr Dharm Pal, *Administration of Sir John Lawrence*.

It was for the first time thus, that definite recommendations towards the acceptance of the responsibility by the Government were made. These recommendations anticipated those of the Royal Commission of 1880, and the immediate result was that when the next famine of 1868 came, the Governor-General Lord Lawrence declared that it was the object of the Government "to save every life," for which district officers were responsible. Still, however, a definite and a detailed policy towards famine was yet a far cry.

The Government made its efforts to give employment to the able-bodied when the drought and famine of 1868-69 laid waste the parts of the North-Western Provinces and Punjab, but affecting more severely the territories of Rajputana from where there was a great influx of emigrants to the British territories thereby straining the Government resources and supply. Despite all the efforts of the Government, however, the famine, cholera, small-pox and fever which were its natural attendants, claimed a roughly estimated number of 1,200,000 lives.

*Other Reforms.* Sir John's period of administration is said to be a landmark in the history of forest conservancy; and for this, Brandis, the Inspector-General of Forests and Cleghorn, the founder of the systematic Forest Administration in this country were responsible.

Act VII of 1865 was passed which provided rules and regulations for forest conservancy. It required that only trained officers should be appointed for the forest administration. The Government reserved tracts should be demarcated. Due precautions should be taken against destruction of the forest by fire. And timber should be systematically cut, etc.

After this Act was passed, selected candidates were sent for training to France and Germany. And the Forest Department was reorganised with a view to providing suitable opportunities of promotion to the officials working in it.

Much was also done towards the construction of canals. With the approval of the Home authorities it was decided that the construction of canals should be taken up by the Government agencies direct, and not by the private companies. The Secretary of State also permitted the raising of funds by loans for the construction of canals. It was laid down that these loans should be raised by the Government for a project costing not less than one lakh rupees. For minor projects only the regular revenues were to be used.

The need of canals as a preventive measure against famines was understood in the time of Lawrence and towards the close of his Viceroyalty a project of the remodelling of the Bari Doab Canal was prepared. Projects were also prepared for making use of the waters of the Indus, the Chenab and the Beas rivers. Arrangements were

made for digging up a canal for watering the arid country between Agra and Delhi. Improvements and repair of the Western Jumna Canal were done. Rohilkhand was surveyed, and arrangements were made for intersecting Oudh with canals for the purpose of communication between the Eastern Rohilkhand and the North-Western Provinces.

John Lawrence was against depending on private companies for the construction of railways under a system which guaranteed certain rate of interest on their investment. He was in favour of the work being taken over by a Government agency in the interest of the Indian tax-payer. Although the Secretary of State rejected his proposal and therefore he himself could not do anything in this respect, yet he left a brilliant Minute on the subject impressed by which Lord Mayo ushered in a new era by replacing the private companies by the Government agency.

John Lawrence also took certain very solid steps towards improving the deplorable sanitary conditions in the cantonments. He executed a very ambitious programme of constructing military quarters provided with all amenities at a cost of 10 million. He also took certain steps to check venereal diseases among the army men. A register was prepared of the public women visited by the European soldiers. Medical officers were appointed to inspect these women periodically, and Lock Hospitals were opened for their treatment. Besides to divert their attentions from these public women, some other means of recreation, such as gymnasium, cricket grounds, tennis courts and swimming baths, were provided.

Some special measures were also adopted to check the epidemics such as cholera. In 1864 Strachey proposed a very good scheme of sanitary supervision in districts and towns which was enthusiastically worked upon by the Government. A special expenditure was sanctioned for the improvement of drainage, water-supply, open spaces, etc., around the buildings which belonged to the State. The local corporations were also encouraged to do the same in all places under the municipal institutions. A sanitary Commission was appointed to supervise sanitation exclusively in the cantonments. While for the supervision of the civil surgeons who were to work as District Health Officers, John appointed a separate Sanitary Inspector-General.

Thus, though no particular attention was paid towards an improvement of the health of the general masses of people, enough was done towards this direction in the cities inhabited by Europeans and the influential Indians. Temple comments upon the work of Sir John : "Though he may not be called the originator of Indian Sanitation, yet he was the founder of it on a systematic basis, and he

established it as a department of the State administration.”<sup>1</sup>

Sufficient attention was also paid to the reform of the prisons in the country. There had been noticed a high rate of mortality among the prisoners which practically amounted to capital punishment. Sir John Lawrence appointed in 1864 a committee under the chairmanship of A.A. Roberts to investigate the matter and recommend reforms. The Committee reported that during the previous decade as many as 46,000 prisoners had died in the prisons due to bad ventilation, bad water-supply and over crowding in the prison houses. The Committee recommended that Central and District jails should be constructed to solve the problem of over-crowding in the existing prisons. It recommended that a better treatment should be given to the female prisoners and the juvenile delinquents, and a proper discipline of work, diet, etc. should be introduced in the prisons. All these recommendations were accepted, and the work of prison reforms went apace.

*The Press.* We traced history of the Press in India upto the time of Lord Hastings in our chapter on that Governor-General and saw how his successor Amherst gave a blow to the freedom of Press. Its later developments upto and in the time of Lord Lawrence may briefly be sketched.

Sir Charles Metcalfe became the acting Governor-General of India in 1835. Lord Bentinck, the successor of Amherst, had been a liberal, but Metcalfe proved to be more keen in his liberalism towards the Press, because, as Thompson wrote, “he regarded the Press as the most valuable section of his Intelligence Department, giving him more information than any other.”<sup>2</sup> He remained the acting Governor-General only for 12 months, and during this period, helped by his Law Member Lord Macaulay, he passed the Act No. XV of 1835 abolishing the Regulation of 1823.

The Indian Press now became as free as its counterpart in England. But this liberal act of his cost him his promotion. Thompson wrote of him : “As Governor-General he put through two reforms, one of which, while it chiefly keeps his name alive today, settled irrevocably whatever chance remained of his becoming *pukka* Governor-General. This was his liberation of the Press. It angered the Directors and that powerful immovable mass, the retired officials.”<sup>3</sup> The Indians were, however, gratified, and they built a hall in Calcutta in Metcalfe’s honour.

From 1835 to 1857 the Indian Press continued enjoying its

1. Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

2. Thompson, *Lord Metcalfe*, p. 319.

3. *ibid.*, p. 317.

liberty. But when the Mutiny of 1857 broke out, the Indian Government had to lay down certain measures for the Press to remain under restraint. The Licensing Act of 1857 was passed making it obligatory on the papers to have a licence from the Government, and the Governor-General in Council was empowered to lay down conditions as necessitated by circumstances for the grant of such licences. The Act was passed for one year only, yet it continued in force till 1865, being renewed every year.

And in the meanwhile certain new members joined the Indian Press. The papers like *Bombay Samachar*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Indian Mirror* and *Akhbar-i-Am* made their appearance, and added a lustre to the journalistic profession.

Lord Metcalfe's Act of 1835 was repealed in 1867, and replaced by the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, by Lawrence which was meant to regulate the newspapers, books and the printing presses. To secure the identity of the printers and publishers, the registration of their names was made obligatory. Copies of any publication produced in the British India, had to be presented to the Government for record and examination. And the publishers and printers had to file their declaration before Magistrates, regarding the good conduct of their presses and publications. This Act was modified to a certain extent in 1890 and in 1940, and continues to be in force even in the present times.

The Press now progressed with rapid strides. Many new papers came into existence, so that by 1870 their number reached as high a figure as 644; 400 of them being the vernacular papers. The art of journalism developed, different types of features began to appear in the papers, and with everyday that passed the people developed paper-consciousness. As the hold of the press on the masses strengthened, the Government felt it necessary that the term sedition which was a serious crime for a paper to commit, should be defined. And therefore, in 1870 a new Section 124-A was added to the Registration Act for this purpose. It however, did not affect the progress of the press in any way.<sup>1</sup>

*Education.* After the receipt of Wood's Despatch, the work of education in India had been taken up in right earnest. There were, however, certain difficulties which the Government faced, among them being the great Mutiny of 1857 which threw the Indian finances into a great disorder. Much of northern India itself being thrown into confusion, the development of education was hampered. Besides there were the repeated famines and then works like the construction of roads, canals and railway lines which claimed the Government's

1. See, Rau, Chalapathi, *The Press in India*, 1968; Ghose, *Press and Press Laws in India*.

immediate attention. Much of the Government's finances were consumed in these works which in the initial stages returned no profits. And then, as Sir H. Verney wrote, the education in India involved "a most arduous task to cause a stream of useful knowledge to percolate through the innumerable strata of immense population rooted in institutions immemorial in their antiquity and unique in the complex character of their framework."<sup>1</sup>

Still the work of education went apace. Progress had been made before the mutiny. After the mutiny, first Secretary of State for India Lord Stanley issued some new instructions in his Despatch of 7 April 1859, but before the Despatch reached India, he having been replaced by Sir Charles Wood the author of the Despatch of 1854 who remained in office till 1866, the work continued under him. During the period, i.e. 1854 to 1866, Departments of Public Instructions were established in each province which, as directed by the Despatch of 1854, consisted each of a Director, inspecting officers and teaching staff from a primary school-master to a college principal. The superior officers were classified in Bengal into four grades in the time of Lawrence in 1865, while in other provinces this was done only later on. The graded officers were appointed by the Secretary of State, while ungraded ones like teachers and inspectors were appointed by the provincial Governors. Each provincial government shared its educational responsibility with a university.

Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were established in 1857; that of Calcutta having a jurisdiction over northern India, Central Provinces and the British Burma; that of Madras having a jurisdiction over that Presidency and southern India; while that of Bombay having it on that Presidency and western India. The recommendation of the Despatch of 1854 that certain chairs should be instituted in each university, was not however accepted, and the education continued to be imparted by Government, Private and Missionary Colleges scattered all over the country. An Engineering College had been established at Roorkee in 1847, and another now was established at Sibpur, near Calcutta, in 1856. Medical Colleges at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta continued.

John Lawrence appointed A.M. Monteath, the Secretary to the Government of India, to report on the state of education in the country as it existed in 1865-66. According to him the three universities were doing their job, and providing suitable tests. About the Bombay University, he said, it had four affiliated colleges, three of which were situated in Bombay itself. The progress of higher education in this university was slow, which was obvious from the fact that in 1866 only 109 students passed entrance under it, while the number of those passing B.A. was only 12. In Madras

1. *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 335.



on the other hand, the university had a total number of only 19 schools and colleges affiliated to it; while the number of candidates appearing for the entrance examination was 555 in 1865-66, out of which only 229 passed.

The greatest progress in education was, however, made by the Calcutta University which had as many as 18 affiliated colleges in Bengal, 7 in the North-West Provinces, 1 in the Central Provinces, 1 in the Punjab and 2 in Ceylon. In 1865-66 as many as 1350 candidates appeared for the entrance examination in this university, out of which 638 got admission in the colleges.

Bengal led all the provinces in higher education and, writes Sir Lovett : "In no other province of India were the literary or professional classes so closely interwoven with the landed classes; and in no other province were University credentials so valuable to a bridegroom."<sup>1</sup> But here, the great mass of common people—the agricultural and labouring classes, remained as backward as ever. Though the indigenous schools still continued, the Government absolutely failed in improving their standard.

The village schools made their greatest progress in the North-West Provinces, where the remarkable scheme of Thompson of introducing one per cent educational cess on land revenue produced its results. Here, however, there were clear signs of decline of the indigenous schools, and the higher and middle classes; as opposed to those of Bengal, did not show any great enthusiasm for education.

The report also mentioned that the female education in the country, as a rule was backward. And so was the Muslim education particularly in Bengal. Nor did the low caste children make any perceivable progress, despite separate schools having been established for them. And for this the caste system had much responsibility to take.

The total expenditure on education in 1865-66 was Rs 8, 217,669, of which Rs 4,529,580 came from the Imperial contributions; the rest coming from the local resources such as educational cess.

In August 1867 the British Indian Association in the North-Western Provinces petitioned to the Governor-General that vernaculars should be encouraged alongwith the English language as the medium of education. A general movement towards this direction was also started in the country. Lawrence showed a favourable attitude and a lead in this direction was given in the Punjab where an

1. Lovett, Verney (Sir), *A History of the Indian Nationalist Movement (1600-1910)*, p. 211.



approval for the establishment of an Oriental College was given.

*Civil Services.* In August 1867 a resolution was passed that greater share should be given to the Indians in these Services. The resolution said that there being less possibility of the Indians succeeding in the Regulation Provinces, every opportunity should be given to them in the Non-Regulation Provinces where they should be promoted upto the rank of Assistant Commissioner. It was supposed that the success of the Indians in a competitive examination was not a sure sign of their successful administrative capability in every case; though it could be so in the case of the English who being rulers by nature could do well if they were proved of having an intellectual attainment as well. Therefore, instead of permitting the Indians free competition, the Indian Government continued to select Indians for the administrative and the judicial services. The Home Government suggested to the Indian Government that these selections should be made not only for the Non-Regulation, but for the Regulation Provinces as well.

*A Reactionary.* John Lawrence proved yet more reactionary in trying to abolish the Bengal Legislative Council which had just recently been established in 1862 under the Indian Council Act of 1861. Though he dropped this proposal as the result of an opposition from the members of his own Council and others outside it, yet he refused to extend the principles of the 1861 Act and establish more Councils. John Lawrence was a lover of centralisation of power, and he openly asserted that in an individual rule alone, where there is no Council, "are secured momentum of improvement, the exaction of responsibility, the exercise of vigilance, in the highest degree attainable." While on the other hand, he said: "There is danger of large provincial questions being dealt with in a comparatively narrow spirit by a local legislature, where particular parties might obtain preponderance."

Lord Curzon remarked on him as follows: "The fact is that Lawrence was unfitted both by temperament and training for work in the peculiar conditions by which the Viceroy is bound. Essentially a man of action rather than of speech, he was intolerant of discussion and debate..."<sup>1</sup>

## RELATIONS WITH THE INDIAN STATES

In his relations with the Indian States, John Lawrence continued the policy of "non-interference" started after the mutiny. Only in case of a gross misrule or in the case of a serious emergency was it that he interfered in the internal affairs of a state. Thus, for instance, when the ruler of Bhawalpur died in March 1866 succeeded by only a four

1. Curzon, *British Government in India*, II, p. 103.

year old son, the conditions in the state became so threatening that Lawrence had to interfere for the maintenance of peace, though he did so only reluctantly. And again, he interfered in the affairs of Tonk and deposed the Nawab of the state who was held responsible for a cold-blooded murder in the house of his minister Hakim Sarvar Shah.

In the case of minor rulers, however, the right to supervise the administration was always claimed. Thus for instance when the Maharaja of Cooh-Bihar died in 1863 succeeded by a minor son Lawrence appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Haughton to administer the state which he was instructed to do efficiently, but without introducing any organic change.

Lawrence also had to deal with certain cases of rights to succession, as in the cases of Kashmir and Hyderabad. In this he adhered to the policy of Canning, of recognising the Hindu right to adopt a son, and the Muslim rights for the collaterals to succeed.

In the control of Ministers and their appointments, though the right to have a say was not too much asserted in the case of the powerful states, yet it was done where necessary, more so in the case of the less powerful states. Thus in the case of Hyderabad, the Nizam was compelled not to dismiss a Minister who in the opinion of the British was an efficient hand in whose absence there was expected to be a serious misrule in the state. In the case of Gaekwad of Baroda, however, who wanted to remove a Minister and appoint a favourite in his place, the government agreed.

In the time of John Lawrence, the authority and prestige of the Residents was increased. In the case of the 379 Chiefs of Kathiawar, for instance, the territories were divided for an efficient judicial administration into four circles each of which was placed under a British Political Assistant who was to exercise the powers of a magistrate in his respective circle. For the Chiefs of Kathiawar, Lawrence plainly declared: "The Chiefs have a right to manage their Chiefships, subject only to the general wishes and policy of British Government."

A strict watch was kept on the military power of the states. The Gaekwad of Baroda for instance wanted to import some arms direct from England. The Resident in the state agreed, but when it was known to the Centre, the Centre declared a general policy that the Chiefs enjoyed no such power to import arms direct from abroad. The political officers were asked to "keep a watchful eye on the military organisation of the State," and immediately report to the Centre if there was a tendency towards an excessive armament.

Maharaja Sindhia had raised some Police battalions in his state

with the permission of the British Government. But when the Governor-General learnt that he was training them on the military lines, he immediately issued orders that these Police battalions should be broken up, and that the military force of the state should be divided and placed in the different parts of the state, instead of concentrating in the capital.

The assertion of the British paramountcy over the Indian state was clearly made when, despite an opposition from the princes and a different advice from some of his own officers, Lawrence issued the rules of a state's responsibility in the case of a Mail robbery within its territories. It was laid down that over and above the value of the property robbed, the prince within whose territory the robbery had taken place had to pay a penalty.<sup>1</sup>

### THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

The annexation of Sind in 1843 and that of the Punjab in 1849 had extended the British north-west frontier right upto the territories under the Afghan sway. The question arose as to the best mode of its defence. The Sind School advocated a forward policy under which Quetta, Kandahar, Kabul and Herat should all be directly occupied by the British. The policy advocated by the Punjab School on the other hand was known as the 'closed border policy', and it was supported by Lawrence, and under it the proposal was to withdraw the frontier to the Indus.

According to Lawrence, the river was a natural and mighty barrier against any foreign invasion and on the rear of it many salubrious places offered best locations for the British troops while beyond the river the things were completely different. Even during the mutiny, when he was Chief Commissioner of Punjab, Lawrence proposed: "We could easily retire from Peshawar early in the day. But, at the eleventh hour, it would be difficult, perhaps impossible." He proposed that Kohat and the Peshawar districts should be turned over to Dost Muhammad. "Peshawar would accomplish his (Dost's) heart's desire, and would do more to make the Afghans friendly to us than anything else."<sup>2</sup>

Lord Canning rejected the views of Lawrence. Those, who opposed Lawrence, asserted that throughout the history, a river had never constituted an effective barrier against an enterprising general. Moreover, the British must always know as to what was happening on the other side of the mountain ranges across the Indus to prevent

1. See Panikkar, K.M., *The Native States of India*; also his *Relations of Indian States*; Barton, Sir W., *The Princes of India*; Singh, G.N., *Indian States and British India*.
2. Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, p. 122.

a surprise attack, and this could not be possible by remaining behind the river.

Lawrence, however, was not content. In 1859 he even addressed himself to Palmerston in England, saying : "In our present position we are brought in close contact with the Afghans and other races of a highly fantastic and restless nature." Once the British withdrew to the left of the Indus, contacts with those tribes would come to an end, and the treasury would save £500,000 annually spent on border frays. Dost Muhammad would be happy, and thus the frontier would be safe. Replying to those who considered this a confession of weakness, he said, "Our position in India is weak and our true policy is to recognise that weakness; and set about remedying its defects." Palmerston's remarks were : "An instance of the follies of the wise." After this he scrawled a word which, according to Arthur Swinson, looks like 'Absurd'.<sup>1</sup>

Lawrence's views with regard to the North-West Frontier, as against his policy of 'Masterly Inactivity' towards Afghanistan, failed to make an impression on the contemporary minds. Still, his policy towards the North-West Frontier tribes remained that of moderation. Military expedition against the erring tribes was rarely resorted to, as against the Bizotis in 1868. The other methods which often proved useful, were the blockade, and demand of compensation for plunder from those who depended on trade with the British India. Such punishment was imposed on the Sulaiman Khel Ghilzai in 1866. Another method to control them was to enrol sons and relations of the tribal chiefs in the Frontier Militia, as also to encourage some of them to establish tribal colonies within the British territories, the threats of reprisal often brought the miscreants to sense.

The tribes on the Sind frontier were of a slightly different character, in as much as they were more amenable to the control of their chiefs than those on the Punjab frontier. Here, therefore, the chiefs like the Khan of Kalat, were befriended and strengthened with annual subsidies which they were to spend on maintaining law and order. In 1866, when this Khan was harassed by the Bugti and Marri tribes, Henry Green proposed grant of a special subsidy to him, occupation of Quetta, and enrolment of some 200 Marri horsemen into the British service. Lawrence, however, rejected the proposals because of his opposition to the forward policy. The Marri raids were connived at by Bugtis, but the attitude of Sind and the Punjab Governments towards the Bugtis differed. It is this which made it difficult to control their plundering activities. At the initiative of the Dera Ismail Khan Deputy Commissioner, Captain Sandeman, a meeting between the officials of the two governments was held in 1867 and a common approach to the subject evolved as a result of

1. *ibid.*, p. 125.

which the Bugti leader Ghulam Hussain was hunted down and killed. while Marris were sought to be placated by offering them a small number of places in the frontier militia and some other benefits. "This was the humble beginning of the system of tribal service which was later on to prove so useful to Sir Robert Sandeman in civilising Baluchistan."<sup>1</sup>

### THE ARAB TRIBES

Lawrence's policy of moderation and masterly inactivity had its application outside India in the British relations with the Arab tribes as well. Aden had been an important entrepot also used for coaling ships of war and other naval and military purposes. Near it there lived the warlike Arab tribes like Abdali and Fazli who often clashed between them and closed roads to Aden thereby stopping its supplies. The British Resident at Aden, Colonel W.L. Merewether, often acted as an arbiter, befriended the Abdali chief Fazl Bin Muh-sin, but was unable to influence Ahmed Bin Abdullah, the Chief of the Fazli tribe, which was more turbulent and active. Merewether belonged to the forward school, and in 1864 when the Fazlis became more troublesome, he proposed advancing sufficient amounts of money to the Abdali chief to organise a coalition to severely punish the Fazli. Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of Bombay, who also belonged to the same school, however thought this proposal of aiding one tribe against another too aggressive.

Soon, however, the situation took a more serious turn with Fazli persisting in his aggressive activities and pursuing a more recalcitrant course. The Resident proposed that nothing short of an expedition against the Fazli would set him right. He also proposed raising of a body of Horse for police duties. Sir Bartle Frere supported the proposals, but Sir John Lawrence though sanctioning the expedition, blamed the Resident for following a partisan attitude, which had resulted into the Fazli chief being alienated against the British. He asked the Bombay Government to ascertain the facts, and if it was absolutely necessary, preferably to have a small camel corps than a body of Horse for police duties. Generally, he reiterated, the British should refrain from interfering into the internal quarrels of these tribes, and be concerned only with the safety of the immediate approaches to Aden. After all, he asserted, these Arab tribes also had certain interests in keeping the Aden markets open, and these should be utilised fully and tactfully. The Fazli chief in 1867 was brought to submission, the Abdali chief was suitably rewarded for his help in this matter and thereafter Lawrence's policy was given a greater effect to, though at the suggestion of the Secretary of State, local Irregular Horse in place of camel corps were raised for police duties at Aden.

1. Dharam Pal, *Administration of Sir John Lawrence in India (1864-1869)*, p. 188.

The British had their trade interests in the Persian Gulf also, and therefore they wanted to keep peace among the Arab tribes in this Gulf and save it from piracy. Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis Pelly was appointed Political Resident for Gulf territories in 1862. He also was of the 'forward school' and wanted the extension of the British influence in these territories to increase the British trade. He was also supported by Sir Bartle Frere, but Lawrence was against this policy. The keynote of the British policy here seemed to be the protection of the weak but friendly state of Muscat from powerful Wahabis who were determined to bring about its destruction. They led repeated raids on Muscat and realised increasing amounts of tribute. The Government of India's policy which was neutral during the 1834 Wahabis raid, became more and more vocal during the later raids so as to save Muscat from extinction. In 1864 there was once again a serious danger of the Wahabis marching over Muscat. Pelly proposed active help to Muscat so as to maintain *status quo*, to fulfil British obligation towards the weak state, and to prevent the piratical Wahabis from becoming more powerful to the detriment of free trade. Lawrence advised caution. Before, however, these instructions reached Pelly, the Wahabis having plundered some Indian merchants at the port of Sur, he sent an ultimatum demanding compensation and apology from the Wahabi Amir within seventeen days. No reply having been received, operations were ordered, and several Wahabi ports, ships, etc. were destroyed or seriously damaged. This resulted in the Wahabi troops being withdrawn from Muscat with a written promise never again to molest that state. The Wahabi envoys apologised for the injuries done to the Indian merchants.

Here, however, serious differences developed between Sir John Lawrence and Sir Bartle Frere, the former blaming Pelly for having gone beyond his authority for putting too strong demands before the Wahabis and for not allowing them sufficient time to meet the demands. The Bombay Government supported the Resident's action.

Soon after, however, a civil war broke out in Muscat itself, and Lawrence repeated his policy of 'Masterly Inactivity', as he had followed it in Afghanistan. In 1866, thus, Sayyad Salim, the ruler of Muscat, was threatened with an invasion by his brother, Sayyad Turki. The British, however, saved the ruler by their interference, and Turki settled down in the British territories after accepting a pension from Salim. In 1867 there was a more formidable rebellion of Azam bin Ghias, the chief of Rostack which was successful and in October, 1868 Salim was expelled from Muscat, Azam taking his place on the throne. Salim, however, did not give up his fight and prepared for naval operations. Pelly proposing to help him, solicited instructions. But Lawrence expressly declared against this and instructed Pelly to refuse permission for naval operations either by Salim or Turki. Peace had to be maintained, if Salim could not

prove his ability while he was in his capital, he was less likely to do so now when he was homeless. He was not therefore to be helped unless substantial number of people in Muscat themselves wanted him to come back.

### EASTERN TURKISTAN

“Standing astride the ancient silk-route between Europe and Asia and at the meeting place of caravan trails from India, Tibet, China, Kokand and Russia, Eastern Turkistan had enjoyed a reputation as a great commercial emporium ‘ever since the days of the Ptolemies.’”<sup>1</sup> William Moorcroft, Superintendent of the East India Company’s Stud, unofficially visited Gartok in western Tibet in 1812. In 1819 and 1821 he again visited “Leh, the hub of the north Himalayan trade,”<sup>2</sup> and the adjoining countries, and secured a commercial agreement with the Ladakh Government which, however, was completely ignored by the British authorities. When Moorcroft was in Leh, he learnt of one Agha Mehdi, a Russian agent, who within a short time paid his second visit at the Ladakh and Ranjit Singh’s courts with letters of goodwill from the Russian authorities and some presents. It occurred to Moorcroft that the Russian march through Kashgarh across the Karakoram via Kashmir from where cooperation of Ranjit Singh could be secured, was possible for the invasion of the British territories. While still at Leh, Moorcroft found Ranjit Singh demanding tribute from Ladakh, and encouraged the Ladakh government to seek British help against this through him. The Calcutta authorities, however, were averse to any such move, and later when they learnt that Moorcroft had even written a letter to Ranjit Singh on his own, giving a veiled “threat of possible British intervention,” he was dismissed from the Company’s service and died on 27 August 1825 while still in Afghanistan. Before his death, however, Moorcroft had brought both Ladakh and Eastern Turkistan within the scope of the British diplomacy, the development of which was now only a matter of time.

In 1834, Gulab Singh, a Lahore feudatory, occupied Ladakh, but when he wanted to go beyond in 1841, the British expressed their concern. After the First Sikh War, the Treaty of Amritsar signed in March 1846, conferred the Kashmir State on Gulab Singh. Under this treaty the demarcation of the boundary line between Ladakh and the eastern Turkistan became a British responsibility. Boundary Commissions of 1846 and 1847, failed to bring clear understanding between Gulab Singh and the Chinese and no “formal frontier agreement was ever signed, and today’s Sino-Indian dispute is one

1. Alder, G.J., *British India's Northern Frontier*, p. 15, quoting J&R. Michell (eds.), *The Russians in Central Asia*, pp. 51-52.
2. *ibid.*, p. 16.



result."<sup>1</sup> Still through these Commissions sufficient information of political and commercial nature was collected. In 1861 R.H. Davies, Secretary to the Government of Punjab, prepared a comprehensive report detailing the tremendous possibilities of trade with eastern Turkistan through Ladakh which would also remove the possibility, if any, of danger of a Russian march from that side. There were, however, physical difficulties of long distances, high mountainous paths, tribal raids, but most of all, the Kashmir government's prohibitive duties and oppression of the merchants at Leh. Davies' report opened the way for Sir John Lawrence and Sir Robert Montgomery, the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, to take more keen interest in the matter. In the meanwhile after expelling the Chinese, an exile, Yaqub Beg having consolidated his power in eastern Turkistan once again, commercial implications with a kingdom several times the size of Britain that he was able to carve out, were realised. These areas though fertile and thickly populated, depended on all manufactures on foreign imports. As such, it was understood that "the demand in all these countries for Indian products and English manufactures is common."<sup>2</sup> Yet more so when Yaqub Beg reciprocated fully the British enthusiasm and supported all cooperation.

A necessary step towards the development of this trade, however, was the appointment of a British commercial agent at Leh to check extortions. It also began to be alleged that the Kashmir government had been levying tribute on the British subjects at Lahaul. Sir John Lawrence was averse to the appointment of any such agent, which he was sure would antagonise the feelings of the Kashmir ruler who had been consistently loyal and well-disposed towards the British. But when the subordinate officials persisted in this course, he agreed to a purely temporary arrangement and said probably a medical man at Leh would be an easier pill for the Maharaja of Kashmir to swallow. Dr Henry Cayley was therefore appointed at Leh for one season only. No sooner, however, Cayley arrived at Leh, than he started removing venal officials and reducing trade duties on his own. Sir Donald McLeod, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab supported Cayley's actions, but Sir Lawrence considered them highly offensive. He said, "I do not myself see what right we have to dictate scales of duty to an independent sovereign."<sup>3</sup> The Maharaja of Kashmir who had vehemently opposed the appointment of any such agent, was prepared to pay a high price for its withdrawal. Sir John Lawrence was prepared to consider the Maharaja's wishes sympathetically, but the Punjab officials, the traders and some members of the Indian Council in England opposed any such move and the Ladakh agent who had been appointed only for one season, was now made a permanent feature.<sup>4</sup>

1. *ibid.*, p. 21.

2. Quoting official documents, *ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

3. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 29.

4. See Kapur, M.L., *Kashmir Sold and Snatched*, pp. 27-30.



"In the meanwhile, from 1863, a series of remarkable men, using false or abbreviated names, in disguise, and employing such ingenious devices as hollow prayer wheels and decimated rosaries to help with the counting of paces, penetrated all over the northern frontier. The mass of information which they brought back was edited and then laid before the Government."<sup>1</sup> Sir John Lawrence opposed any such explorations on the sly in the dangerous areas, forbade the government officials from engaging themselves into such activities, and even compelled one to resign after he had disobeyed the orders. He could not, however, stop such movements of the private individuals. A tea-planter Robert Shaw and a subaltern William Hayward penetrated privately into Kashgar in 1868, and on the basis of the information gathered by them, the Punjab Government insisted in 1868 that a native officer to represent the interests of the Indian traders should be appointed at Kashgar. Sir Lawrence rejected the proposal arguing that any such contacts with Yaqub Beg might encourage him to seek British help against any Russian aggression. Later in the year, however, the persistent demand for such an appointment was granted which cleared the way for Lord Mayo in 1870 to open diplomatic relations with eastern Turkistan.

### BHUTAN WAR

The Bhutan war during 1864-65 was the only episode that disturbed the peaceful tenure of the Government of Sir John Lawrence. This small Himalayan principality was ruled by two authorities, Dharma Raj, the spiritual head whose office was held by incarnation, and Dev Raj, the temporal head elected by a Council of Ministers. There was a narrow strip of land about fifteen miles broad on the average, and extending from the Tista river on the west to the Dhansiri river on the east. This very fertile land which could be developed into rich cotton fields, and which could also answer the purpose of European settlements, lying at the base of the Bhutan hills as it was, had been attracting greedy British eyes since long. It was divided into 18 parts, known as Duars, seven lying on the Assam frontier and eleven on that of Bengal. There had been earlier boundary disputes between the British and the Bhutan authorities, but in the time of Lord Amherst, when as a result of the First Anglo-Burmese War, the Burmese were driven out of Assam, the British for the first time came into contact with the seven Duars on the Assam frontier, the possession of which had been disputed between the Assamese and Bhutan. Differences also arose with regard to the tribute Bhutan used to pay to Assam.

As soon as the British came into contact with the seven eastern Duars, they got anxious somehow to develop their hold on them. The Bhutanese were blamed of repeated aggression on the British

1. Alder, G.J., *op. cit.*, p. 31.

territories, and in 1841 Lord Auckland unceremoniously annexed these Duars in the name of peace, promising to pay Rs 10,000 annually to Bhutan as compensation. The remaining eleven Duars on the Bengal frontier, however, still remained, and the English officers who knew the value of this rich land sought excuses to swallow it. The Bhutanese saved them in 1855 by placation and apologies when for an allegedly aggressive attitude on their part, Jenkins, the Governor-General's agent on the North-East Frontier, proposed to annex them. The so-called differences, however, continued and in 1862 the British proposed to send a mission to Dev Raj to iron them out. The Bhutanese were alarmed, and requested that they themselves would send a representative to the British instead. But before they could do so, a civil war broke out in Bhutan. In the meanwhile a British Mission was despatched, which despite obstacles placed in its way, reached the Bhutanese court where it offered a draft treaty to be signed. The terms of this treaty, however, were so offensive, that Tongsa Penlope, the most influential Bhutanese chief, preferred to go to war than to accept them. He was also alleged to have crumpled up the draft treaty in the very presence of Ashley Eden, the leader of the mission, used insolent language and forced him to sign a document renouncing the British claims on the seven eastern Duars. The mission itself escaped captivity with a great difficulty.

This was too much for the haughty and impetuous British officers to swallow. Sir Lawrence was compelled in these circumstances to renounce for the future the payment of rent on the eastern Duars, the Falakata district of Bhutan was annexed, and an ultimatum was issued on 9 June 1864 to Dev Raj to satisfy certain British demands by 1 September or face a war. The preparations in the meanwhile were carried out, and as no satisfactory reply was received, the British forces were ordered to march. A heroic fight was given by the Bhutanese, but they were no match to the British resources and experience.

The war was concluded by the peace treaty of 11 November 1865, as a result of which the remaining eleven Duars were also annexed by the British, in return for which they were to pay to Bhutan Rs 25,000 in the first year, Rs 35,000 in the second year, Rs 45,000 in the third year and Rs 50,000 annually thereafter. This was supposed to be sufficient to prevent the Bhutanese from any future mischief, for the threat of the stoppage of this payment would enable the British to control their behaviour. It may be useless to comment on the validity or otherwise of this war. The whole history was a witness to the fact that in India whatever territory the British had set their heart on, arguments and causes developed for its annexation. The Duars could be no exception. The crime of the Bhutanese was that they possessed such rich tracts of land which produced immense quantities of timber and cotton which, according

to Ashley Eden himself, were "one of the finest in India, and under our Government would in a few years become one of the wealthiest."<sup>1</sup> The tragedy is that Sir Lawrence also became a party to this sordid affair.

### NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

Toward the North-East Frontier tribes of India also, the policy of Sir John Lawrence was that of conciliation tempered with courage and strength. His policy was not of establishing any administrative or territorial control over them, it was rather that of defending the British territories themselves from savage inroads and plunders which was the habit of these uncivilised people. The view of Lawrence was that savage violence could not be stopped by violence alone. A temporising policy showing forbearance mixed with a show of strength, the policy of paying them subsidies with the threats of their withdrawal in case they misbehaved, and not the policy of sending expeditions to overawe them by burning their villages and by wholesale killing, was the policy which would deliver the goods.

The paying of subsidies was termed by the 'forward school' as blackmail. Colonel Hopkinson thus remarked: "By all means I would say let the payment of 'blackmail' be continued so long as it secures the peace of the frontier. What would be a very large and very ample sum to expend in 'blackmail' would go but a little way towards defraying the expenses of a military expedition on a very small scale; but gold has never yet prevailed in the long run where there was not iron in reserve to support it, and on this frontier an appeal to the sword is a contingency for which we must ever be prepared." The Bengal Government, however, took the 'forward school' to task for its dubbing the conciliatory policy as that of 'blackmail'. The Bengal Government, with the views of which Sir John agreed, remarked: "The essential difference between 'blackmail' and the annual allowance paid to the Abhor (a formidable tribe on the Assam frontier) is this: That in the one case the forbearance of the savage tribe is made by them conditional on payment of the stipulated allowance, and in the other the payment of the allowance is made by us conditional on the good conduct of the tribe. The one is initiated in an aggressive spirit, the other in a spirit of conciliation." To this Lawrence added that uncivilised tribes needed patience to be dealt with, though they must not be allowed to carry away the impression that their allowance would be increased in proportion to the nuisance they create. The Secretary of State for India, approved this policy of Lawrence in the North-East Frontier in a letter thus: "Experience appears conclusively to have shown that measures of retaliation, whether adopted alone or in

1. Quoted Dharm Pal, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

combination with a system of subsidies, are not, in this instance, to be depended on for the protection of the plain country, while they certainly fail to reclaim from a state of savagery the tribes on which they are brought to bear and Her Majesty's Government rejoice to learn that an attempt is now to be made to conciliate these wild and hitherto hostile tribes. They should be happy to find that a policy which has been crowned with success in other parts of India will prove in the end, not of less service on the frontier of Assam and Arracan."<sup>1</sup>

Sir John was indeed successful in this policy on this frontier as elsewhere. In the Assam frontier of the British thus, there were Naga, Abhor, and Ghor tribes, of whom the Nagas—particularly Angami Nagas among them—were the most troublesome. After the first Anglo-Burmese War, the British tried to open communication between Assam and Manipur through the Naga territories in 1832. The Nagas resisted resulting in two expeditions being sent to punish them. Two more expeditions between 1838 and 1840 brought much bloodshed and destruction on both sides with the result that in 1841 peaceful approach to the Naga chiefs was made which resulted in an agreement guaranteeing the security of the frontier. The headstrong among the English officers, however, destroyed this peace in 1843 by demanding tribute from the Angamis which infuriated the latter. A British officer was murdered which led to one more expedition being despatched into the Naga territories attended as usual by destruction and misery which both sides had to suffer. It is in such circumstances that Lawrence appeared on the scene. The matter was thoroughly discussed and several proposals emanated, such as that the Naga territories should be conquered and put under the British control, a chain of military posts should be established on the frontier to keep them overawed, the whole Naga territory should be blockaded to stop all commercial intercourse with the British villages, the Nagas should be conciliated with subsidies and a British officer should be located in the Naga hills to befriend those people, etc. Lawrence supported the last alternative, though he said subsidies were to be used but only sparingly. Lt. Gregory was appointed at Samaguting to prevent any Naga incursions on the British territories, by tact, allowances and only a moderate use of force.

The facts of which Lawrence constantly reminded his subordinates were that the areas these frontier tribes inhabited were not only hilly and extremely difficult to traverse, more particularly in the midst of a hostile and obstinate people, but they were also so unhealthy that none but these people could live there. Nor, in his view, was it proper to punish a whole people by a blockade for a crime that only a few individuals committed.

1. From official documents quoted by Dharm Pal, *op. cit.*, pp. 231, 232, 234.

Lawrence followed a similar policy towards the Abhors against whom punitive expeditions had been sent in 1848, 1858 and 1859 which brought about a huge waste of money and precious human lives, but which had yet not been able to establish peace on the Abhor border. The policy of ruthless retaliation in fact had completely failed with the result that even before Lawrence arrived, it was thought best to sign peace treaties with the Abhor chiefs in 1862-63 under which annual subsidies were promised in return for a peaceful border with the British. In 1865 when a slight trouble developed as a result of mutual clashes among the Abhors themselves, the occasion was sought to be made use of by those who opposed conciliation. But Lawrence stuck to this policy which by and large had maintained peace. Lawrence followed a similar policy towards Kumi, Khyeng, Shendu and other tribes on the Arakan and Chittagong frontiers which had a cordial approach to the Secretary of State.

A few words with regard to his person and achievements before we close. Lover of a centralised power and believer in the superiority of the English race, John Lawrence was a man of industrious habits and strong self-confidence. Lawrence has been adversely commented upon by some writers. Thus, for instance, writes Bosworth Smith: "He was plain and blunt in his speech, and not least with those who applied to him for appointment for which they were not fit, or pressed him to do things of which he could not approve."<sup>1</sup>

Writes Temple : "Being human, he must needs have faults, though the proportion which these bore to his virtues was small indeed; he certainly had a tendency to chafe over much, yet if this be a fault, then owing to his self command, it affected himself only but not others. He loved power, indeed, which he habitually described in a favourite Persian phrase as *khud-raftari* which is an elegant synonym for having one's own way."<sup>2</sup>

Lawrence's discrimination in arming the Indian soldiers was absurd indeed; much that he did to reorganise the army or to provide amenities for the soldiers was for the Europeans, and not for the Indians who were supposed to be good neither for high military duties, nor civil. The great loss of life in the Orissa famine shows an utter absence either of efficiency or sympathy, or what is worse, of both, in his administrative machinery.

Yet there are not a few of his activities on the basis of which the administration of John Lawrence may honestly be praised. His works in connection with forest conservancy, his organisation

1. Smith, R. Bosworth, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, (1885), p. 349.

2. Temple, Sir R., *India in 1880*, p. 160.

of the Indian sanitation on systematic lines and some of his economic reforms; all these deserve our unreserved appreciation. The most praiseworthy of all his acts, however, was his policy towards Afghanistan, which was the policy of 'Masterly Inactivity'; and his policy towards the frontier tribes which was that of moderation and conciliation.

Lawrence retired from India in January 1869. As he reached England, he was honoured and raised to the peerage under the title of "Lord Lawrence of the Punjab and of Grateley", Grateley being a small estate in Salisbury Plain left him by his sister.<sup>1</sup> He did not, however, make a mark in the Parliament, and concerned himself rather with "beneficent work such as the London School Board, of which he became chairman, the Church Missionary Society and the management of various hospitals."<sup>2</sup> In 1878 when Lytton in India declared the Second Afghan War, Lawrence condemned the 'forward school' which now had secured a predominance in India, and exclaimed with regard to the forces marched to Afghanistan: "They will all be murdered every one of them."<sup>3</sup> His warnings were not heeded, but they proved correct. "His eyesight and his health gradually failed, and in July 1878 he died in London at the age of sixty-eight and was buried in Westminster Abbey, a statue being set up to him in Waterloo Place."<sup>4</sup>

### MASTERLY INACTIVITY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN

The Governor-Generalship of Sir John Lawrence, however, is not known in history as much for his internal administration or his relations with the Indian states as for what is known as his policy of 'Masterly Inactivity' towards Afghanistan. The evolution and application of this policy deserves somewhat greater details.

After the First Afghan War, the Anglo-Afghan relations gathered importance, as the time passed. There were reasons for this, as Sir Charles Aitchison<sup>5</sup> comments. It was because of these relations that the Indian affairs came within the range of European diplomacy. They in fact touched the very foundation of the Indian Empire; involved the study of the character of a race, unique in its attitude of mind, in its disposition of character and in its physical existence, and they constituted a subject which became of much greater importance than any other subject in the British foreign policy in India. Their importance increased yet further when they came to a masterhand, Lord Lawrence, who, according to R. Bosworth Smith, "was neither 'Liberal' nor 'Conservative' in his

1. Gilliat, Edward, *Heroes of Modern India*, p. 255.
2. Mersey, Viscount, *The Viceroy and Governors-General of India*, p. 84.
3. Gilliat, Edward, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
4. Mersey, Viscount, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
5. Aitchison, Sir Charles, *Lord Lawrence in the 'Rulers of India' series*.

Afghan politics, but an honest statesman.”<sup>1</sup> Lord Lawrence laid the foundation of a new policy in his relations with the Afghans, which was both misunderstood and misrepresented, but which in fact was the product of a rare and very balanced thinking, as our study shows.

Between 1842 when the First Afghan War was concluded and 1864 when Lord Lawrence came to India as Viceroy, great many changes had taken place on the north-west side of the British Indian Empire. Sind had been conquered and annexed to the British Empire. The two Anglo-Sikh wars had been fought and Punjab had been placed under the direct British control since 1849. And all this brought the British into a direct contact with Afghanistan. The means of communication up to the British frontiers with Afghanistan were developed, and the European needs began to take an ever-increasing share in determining the Indian policy towards that country.

For ten years after the restoration of Dost Muhammad on the Afghan throne the British policy towards him remained undefined. After that it slowly began to take shape. Treaties of friendship were signed in 1855 and 1857. By the treaty of 1855 the British promised non-intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, while Dost Muhammad in return agreed to take British friends as his own friends and their enemies as his own enemies. When in 1856 Persia once again besieged Herat, the British helped Dost Muhammad against that country and Persia had to come to terms in 1857. This confirmed the British friendship with Dost Muhammad yet further, and a new treaty was signed in 1857. This friendship continued undisturbed till 1862. And during the great Indian Mutiny of 1857 Dost Muhammad wrote several letters to the British expressing his sympathies. But in 1862, differences between the two arose, and that happened when Dost Muhammad attacked Herat against the British desires and conquered it in 1863, shortly after which he himself died.

It was, however, not until the Russian shadow fell upon the states to the north of Afghanistan that the Kabul affairs assumed a permanent importance. When the Russian Emperor Nicholas I visited Queen Victoria in 1844, he agreed and assured her that the Khanates of Bokhara, Khiva and Samarkand would be treated as neutral zones. The friendly relations between Russia and England, however, were rudely shaken by the Crimean War; and after this Russia began to expand into these Khanates which raised the British apprehensions to a high pitch, and made them serious in their relations with Afghanistan.

As we already know, there were two schools of thought having

1. Smith, R. Bosworth, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, (1885), II, p. 484.



different views as to how the possible Russian threats to Afghanistan could be met.<sup>1</sup> The Sind school which had been founded by Major John Jacob and expounded in the time of Lord Lawrence by Green and Henry Rawlinson, favoured a forward policy and the occupation of Quetta which according to Green, was "a strategical point remarkably adapted for meeting all comers, as friends or foes, from the west towards the east." According to this school, there was a real danger from Russia to the British in India, and if Russia invaded this country there would be thousands to support her in Central Asia and thousands to welcome her in India.

Opposed to this was the Punjab school of thought founded before the mutiny by Lawrence himself, and supported by Herbert Edwardes and Harry Lumsden. Edwardes held that if the British wanted to save Afghanistan from going over to Russia, the best policy would be "to show them we ourselves want nothing in Afghanistan..." And the arguments of Lord Lawrence against the occupation of Quetta were as follows. The distance between Sukkur and Quetta, he forwarded, was as much as 257 miles, and there were formidable difficulties of crossing a desert and a pass when one moved from the former place to the latter. Moreover, he held, separated from the base at Jacobabad by a desert and mountain file as Quetta was, if the force at Quetta were seriously threatened from a front attack, the predatory tribes would surely close the pass in the rear. And again, the occupation of Quetta would strengthen the Afghan doubts regarding the British occupation of their country. It would involve huge expenditure, and since Afghanistan being a poor country "a large army of foreigners cannot exist in Afghanistan, and that a small one cannot hold its own securely." Nor, according to Lawrence, could the political and the commercial missions at Kabul, Bokhara, Yarkand, etc. be in any way a paying proposition. They could be murdered, or insulted, and therefore their presence at those places would involve the British into serious problems of their protection.

Hence, the basic principles of the policy which Lord Lawrence desired to follow during his Viceroyalty in India were to strengthen the ruler of Afghanistan without interfering in the internal affairs of that country; to maintain Afghanistan as a friendly power between India and Russia, and clearly demarcating the respective spheres of influence of India and Russia in Central Asia, the latter country to be informed that while she was free to do as she liked in her own sphere of influence, she would not be permitted to interfere in any way in the affairs of Afghanistan which would strictly be within the British sphere of influence; and while strictly refusing to enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the ruler of Afghanistan, to be interested still "in the security of his dominion."<sup>2</sup>

1. See chapter on Lord Auckland.

2. For further details, see Aitchison, *Lord Lawrence*; Smith, R.B., *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II.



The captive Afzal having now been released, was proclaimed by his enemies as Amir. Kabul was illuminated in his honour, and coins struck in his name. Kandahar and Herat alone now remained in the possession of Sher Ali, and his future prospects were considerably dimmed. The British agent was now permitted by Lord Lawrence to present himself before Afzal, considering him to be the ruler of Kabul. On 30 May Afzal wrote to Lord Lawrence that he should be recognised as the ruler of Afghanistan instead, and the old friendly treaty with Dost Muhammad should be revived. But Lawrence replied that while he was desirous of satisfying Afzal's desire, it would be inconsistent with the British policy to break off with Sher Ali who had done no offence to them, and who still retained the possession of Kandahar and Herat. In such circumstances, therefore, if Afzal consolidated his position in Kabul, he would be recognised only as such. "Sincerity and fair dealing," wrote Lawrence, "induce me to write this plainly and openly to your highness."

Sher Ali made yet another effort to recapture his capital, but he was defeated by Azim and Abdur Rehman on 17 July 1867, after which he fled to Kandahar. Now, however, it was Kandahar's turn to shut its doors upon him, and he had to turn to Herat. Afzal announced his occupation of Kandahar to the British, and was now recognised as the ruler of Kabul and Kandahar. Lord Lawrence, however, still expressed his pity for Sher Ali, and hoped that peace would soon be restored in the country under one of the sons of Dost Muhammad. He recognised Sher Ali as the ruler of Herat.

Just about this time a new development took place in the British relations with Afghanistan. Lord Lawrence received a special request from Sher Ali that the British should help him against his brothers. When Sher Ali was told of the British correspondence with Afzal and the policy they were following towards the Afghan politics, he hinted that if the British did not help him he would request help from Persia and Russia. Here was the tenderest part of the British policy that Sher Ali touched, and the reply that he received from Lord Lawrence was prompt. He was clearly told that if he took his intended step, the British would go at once to the help of the ruler of Kabul and supply him with the necessary arms. "Our relations," Lawrence said, "should always be with the *de facto* ruler of the day; and so long as the *de facto* ruler is not unfriendly to us, we should always be prepared to renew with him the same terms as obtained under his predecessor."

At the same time, he also suggested to the Home authorities

some sort of understanding with the Czar of Russia. He recommended that the respective spheres of influence of the two Governments of Russia and England in Central Asia should be defined, and the rights of both to have contact and treaties with the tribes and nations on their respective sides should be recognised. Russia thus should be permitted a free hand in Bokhara and Khokand, while she should have no jealousy with regard to the British relations with Afghanistan and the neighbouring tribes.

The time when these recommendations were made to the Home authorities was important. Russia was gradually recovering from the crushing effects of the Crimean war. She had just annexed half of Khokand and reduced the other half to her submission, and had reached the very frontiers of Afghanistan on her north-west. She seemed to be set upon having a strong position in Central Asia by closing the open frontiers between her advanced position at Perovsk on the Orenberg line, and Vernoe on the line of Siberia; while on the Caspian Sea her activities were aimed at the occupation of Krasnovodsk and an advance along Atrek. The closing of the frontiers, as above referred to, was achieved by Russia in 1864, while her aims were fulfilled on the Caspian Sea in 1869, i.e. towards the close of the reign of Lord Lawrence in India. Russia also brought herself face to face with the three Uzbek Khanates of Khokand, Bokhara and Khiva. Khokand and Bokhara appealed to the British for help, but in vain, and their independence was destroyed. When Samarkand also fell before the Russians, Lord Lawrence pressed the Home Government once again for some sort of arrangement with Russia, and urged that, that country "might be given to understand, in firm but courteous language, that it cannot be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan or in those of any state which lies contiguous to our frontier." In the light of those proposals of Lawrence to the Home authorities, it is clear that he cannot be blamed for having been different towards the rising Russian ambitions in Central Asia.

The clearly defined policy of Lord Lawrence was, as he himself explained: "Should a foreign power, such as Russia, ever seriously think of invading India from without or, what is more probable, of stirring up the elements of disaffection or anarchy within it, our true policy...would then be a previous abstinence from any entanglement at either Kabul, Kandahar or any other similar outpost; full reliance on a compact, highly equipped and disciplined army within the Indian side of the border; contentment of the Indian masses; security of titles and pensions of the principle Indian chiefs and aristocracy; construction in India of material works for public benefit, which would be the British political and military strength; husbanding of the Indian finances, and consolidating and multiplying the British resources in India; preparation for all contingencies, and the trust of the British in rectitude and

honesty of their own intentions ; and finally, avoidance of all sources of complaint which either invite foreign aggression or stir up restless spirits to domestic revolt."<sup>1</sup>

It was from these proposals of Lord Lawrence in fact that the later policy of the Government of India on the subject emanated. When Sher Ali recovered his throne at Kabul, he was granted an assistance by the British. A neutral zone was created in Central Asia between the British and the Russian spheres of influence. Negotiations were conducted with Russia for the delimitation of the northern and western frontiers of Afghanistan. And consolidation of the Afghan Government was continued down to the time of Lytton.<sup>2</sup>

To come back to the main story, Sher Ali though hinting about the possibility of his contacts with Persia and Russia, was perhaps never serious in the proposal for he knew thoroughly well the complication such a step was bound to raise. He, therefore, concentrated his attention on his own resources, and began to gather his strength. Luck also favoured him for Afzal died on 7 October 1867, and was succeeded by Azim. But neither the former, nor the latter, was capable of retaining the favours of the people. Azim was detested more than Afzal, and a reign of terror was established in the country. In the meanwhile Sher Ali having recouped with the help of his friends in Turkestan, marched on Kandahar, defeated the Kabul army and re-occupied the capital. Azim fled to Turkestan, and by January 1869 his power to create any more trouble was completely destroyed.

Sher Ali now having established undisputed and complete hold on the throne once again, wrote so to the Governor-General who congratulated him in return. The time had come to work on the second part of Lord Lawrence's policy towards Afghanistan, which involved the strengthening of the Amir to secure his good-will, and to restore peace in the ruined country, but without interfering in the internal affairs, and without entering into any offensive and defensive alliance, though to be keenly "interested in the security of his dominion" so as to maintain a friendly power between India and Russia. Working on this policy, Lord Lawrence sent the Amir a present of £60,000 and a good quantity of arms. Sher Ali was grateful to the Governor-General, and was just preparing to come to India to pay him a visit when some trouble arose in Turkestan and he had to postpone the visit.

In the meanwhile Lord Lawrence retired from India. But before he left he wrote a farewell letter to the Amir promising him a further

1. For further details see Aitchison, *Lord Lawrence*.
2. See following chapters on Mayo, Northbrook and Lytton.

gift of £60,000 for no return but his good-will. Lord Lawrence assured the Amir once again that the British had no aggressive designs towards his country. After the return of Lord Lawrence to England, Queen Victoria wrote to the Amir assuring him of no change in the British policy towards Afghanistan.

Shortly after the departure of Lord Lawrence Sher Ali visited India, and had an interview with his successor Lord Mayo at Ambala on 27 March 1869. A Russian newspaper commenting on this meeting said : "The first stone of the wall was laid, which the Anglo-Indian Government is hastening to build across the path of the Russians in Central Asia."

Many adverse comments have been made on Lord Lawrence's policy towards Afghanistan, and H.H. Dodwell writes that the so-called policy of 'masterly inactivity' of Lord Lawrence in truth consisted merely in waiting upon the events. According to Dodwell, the views of Lawrence "were based on the fallacy that the Afghans were too foolish to recognise their own interests." His policy in fact, as Dodwell further comments, was nothing but a belated result of the old dogma of non-intervention in the Indian states. But Lord Lawrence little realised that these states had no other power to turn to whereas in the case of Afghanistan there were Russia and Persia which would welcome an appeal for help from any Afghan prince, and thus exploit the situation. Lord Lawrence, according to Dodwell, himself understood the fallacy of his policy when he hastily changed it at the end by giving financial and arms aid to the Amir Sher Ali. Prior to this too he had threatened to aid one of the Afghan princes who did not turn to Russia.

But by the time Lord Lawrence changed his policy at the end, Dodwell says, a great harm had been done. Abdur Rehman had been driven out of Afghanistan, and having no faith in the British had taken refuge in Russia. Nor was Sher Ali himself satisfied. He rather openly declared : "The English look to nothing but their own interests and bide their time." Moreover, it was a well-known fact that for Russia the absorption of Khokand, Bokhara, Khiva and Samarkand was not difficult. The Russian social and religious organisation was in fact of oriental type, and therefore the Russian absorption of these territories would involve no violent change. These small states were actually absorbed by Russia, while Lord Lawrence instead of securing an advanced position in Asia in order to check the rising Russian ambitions, continued demanding the solution of the Russian problem by securing an agreement with her in Europe, little realising, as Dodwell continues, that "an agreement in Europe could only be reached by subordinating English to Russian interests on the continent."

Russia, in fact, Dodwell implies, was too much encouraged in

her ambitions in Central Asia. And later on when the Oxus was suggested as the dividing line between the two countries, Russia pointed out Afghanistan as the appropriate neutral zone. And all this happened because of the weak policy of Lord Lawrence towards that country.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Majumdar and others also comment that the policy of Lord Lawrence was disadvantageous to the British. Sher Ali was expected to be friends with a power which did not help him in his critical times. By following a forward policy during this period, these writers assert, the British "could have easily secured a firm footing in Afghanistan, and effectively stopped forever the Russian influence in that quarter." Hence, the maximum these writers would concede to Lawrence is that "he succeeded in isolating the Afghan Civil War, and prevented any international complication."<sup>2</sup>

Examined closely, however, neither the arguments of Dodwell nor those of Majumdar and others seem to go too far. The policy of Lord Lawrence of waiting upon the events, if we apply Dodwell's arguments one by one, was rather better than that of having a head-long plunge, and after the head is broken to repent that it was after all a 'wrong action; as Cornwallis and Lytton did. Moreover, the Afghans certainly recognised that so long as the British remained in India, it would neither be secure nor very much paying to turn to Persia and Russia. And so long as the Afghans recognised this, a balanced-headed Englishman had nothing to worry. The presence of Persia and Russia to which Afghanistan could turn, was rather a better argument for Lawrence not to interfere in the Afghan politics, as against Dodwell's assertion. The policy of Lord Lawrence was in fact to support the most capable man in Afghanistan, instead of supporting a weakling like Shah Shuja of Lord Auckland and there creating an explosive situation in that country making it easier for the Persians and the Russians to exploit. And so long as the most capable man in Afghanistan was not able to assert his power, and was not completely discovered by the British, it was always better to recognise everybody in that country who possessed a territory, so that all were satisfied and none turned to Persia or Russia. For however strongly the British may have desired Afghanistan to be a peaceful, strong and consolidated kingdom, and when it was none of these, the British should have tried to make it so, they should definitely have taken upon themselves the more dangerous and onerous duties, than merely watching cautiously and interfering only when the situation showed a definite inclination to turn against them. History was there to show that a march into Afghanistan was easy, but to remain there—which was a necessity in case the British took the steps implied by Dodwell—was a

1. Dodwell, H.H., *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 412.

2. Majumdar and others, *The Advanced History of India*, p. 571.

sound proposition neither financially nor strategically.

Then, for Dodwell to assert that Lawrence hastily changed his policy at the end or prior to this, clearly shows that the writer has applied his talent to understand the policy of Lawrence neither in its true perspective nor in its actual significance. The policy of Lord Lawrence right from the beginning was not against helping a ruler of Afghanistan, it was rather that of helping the real ruler so that the money and energy expended thus did not go waste. Nor was it the policy of permitting the situation so to deteriorate as to make either Persia or Russia to intervene.

If Abdur Rehman went over to Russia, he had lost his game and was an insignificant man. And it brought no harm to the British. If Russia occupied the Khanates, an agreement with that country in Europe alone could help the British. For if the British too tried to advance into Central Asia by absorbing and annexing Afghanistan, it should have been simply suicidal for them. And for this the arguments are too well known to be repeated. And further, if Russia later on pointed at Afghanistan as the neutral zone, that was the result of the weak policy not of Lord Lawrence, but of the Home Government who refused to consider his proposal and enter into negotiations with Russia in time.

Nor are the arguments of Dr Majumdar and his co-writers any more tenable. If Sher Ali misunderstood Lord Lawrence, he knew it well that he supported only an able man, and also that one who turned either to Russia or Persia was not an able man in his eyes. Nor do these writers seem to have comprehended that it was possible to secure a firm footing in Afghanistan, but that footing could never have been more firm than the one the British secured with Shah Shuja, and hence it could never be more lasting than that.

And again, some writers comment that the policy of Lord Lawrence to leave the contending parties to fight and recognise the *de facto* ruler was to invite competition. But here it is not understood that the competition began only after Sher Ali had been recognised as Amir, and his son was recognised as the heir-apparent. Amin's ambitions were condemned, Azim's movements were reported and the British agent who offered his compliments after Azim's success was rebuked. All this was not done to encourage competition. Afzal was given a recognition only when he seemed to have firmly established himself; and not to have done so at this time should have signified only blindness before the facts, and it should have made the British interests in Afghanistan to suffer.

Nor was the mere moral recognition without a material support of much import. Such recognition of Sher Ali did not prevent his defeat, nor did it give Azim or Afzal an ultimate victory. And to

justify that the moral recognition was dangerous, is to repeat what is only too obviously wrong.

Sir Charles Aitchison aptly comments : "This much at any rate, is certain that the policy which Lawrence pursued met with general acceptance at the time. Lord Mayo's policy was no reversal, but a continuation and development of it."<sup>1</sup> For Lord Mayo frankly admitted the merits of the policy of the hero of the Indian Mutiny, when he put no European officers as Resident in the Afghan cities, nor did he sign an offensive and defensive alliance with the Afghan Amir. No British soldier was sent to coerce the Amir's rebellious subjects, nor did he interfere or help anybody in the Afghan politics. Even financially, after giving the promised gift of £60,000, no further or yearly sum was fixed upon the Amir. Mayo in fact assured the Amir that the policy of his predecessor would not be disturbed.

Justifying his policy on Afghanistan, Lord Lawrence himself later on after retiring from India remarked in a letter to the editor of *The Times* ; "of late.. we have seemed to think that we understand the interests of Afghans better than they do themselves." And this, he said, was wrong. It was he repeated, easy to occupy Afghanistan, but very difficult to keep this mountainous country where its inhabitants were always at advantage. And under such circumstances, therefore, it was better to watch the British interest from outside, than in an over-anxiousness meddle in what were purely the Afghan interests, and thus create difficulties. Lawrence remarked elsewhere : "The Afghan is courageous, hardy, and independent; the country he lives in is...extraordinarily adapted for guerrilla warfare; these people will never cease to resist so long as they have a hope of success, and, when beaten down, they have that kind of elasticity which will ever lead them to renew the struggle whenever opportunity of so doing may occur."

Nor does the Afghan frontier need any fortifications. Nature has in fact already provided it in the shape of barren rocks, waterless deserts and inhospitable tribes. And under these conditions, Aitchison rightly remarks : "I am sure—that considering the conditions of our tenure in India, no forward policy can hope to be a success."<sup>2</sup>

A balanced man of far-sighted vision at the helm of affairs in India could not ignore certain social and moral elements involved in the problem. The British were only few in India, and the British soldiers only a handful. And if there was a disaster at the frontiers it would have shaken their empire in India to its foundations.

The policy of Lord Lawrence towards Afghanistan was indeed

1. Aitchison, *Lord Lawrence*, p. 231.

2. *ibid.*, p. 232.

the only sound policy that could be followed. It saved the British interests in that country, as well as saved them from unnecessary troubles. The policy served well for a decade after Lawrence; but when it was reversed and the British determined to interfere in Afghanistan, they resolved to force a Resident upon the Amir, and when they tried to dismember that country and set up a separate ruler in Kandahar, they ended up in a disaster. The British after 1881 had practically to return to the policy of Lawrence till 1919, for although the British "guaranteed the inviolability of Afghanistan as a buffer state," writes Roberts, "we scrupulously abstained from all interference in Afghan internal affairs."

"There can be no doubt that on the whole," continues Roberts, "Lord Lawrence's policy was wise and provident." "His 'inactivity', whether 'masterly' or not, was seasoned and deliberate. Few now doubt that he was right."<sup>1</sup>

1. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 406-411; Smith, R. Bosworth, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 484-89.



# 12

## Lord Mayo, 1869-1872

Born on 21 February 1822, Richard Southwell Bourke, sixth Earl of Mayo, before he was appointed as the Governor-General of India, had for three times held the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland in the Conservative ministries: the job he liked best. When he was appointed by Disraeli to succeed Sir John Lawrence in India, the English Press having not yet fully recognised the merits of this illustrious son of their soil, received this announcement with a marked disfavour. And when very shortly after this, before the Governor-Generalship actually fell vacant, Disraeli's Conservative Government fell to be succeeded by the Liberal Ministry of Gladstone, the Press tried to make the new Premier avail himself of the opportunity, and cancel the appointment. Gladstone, however, magnanimously stuck to his predecessor's decision, and Mayo ultimately left for India. But before he did so, he wrote to Sir Stafford Northcote. : "I am sorely hurt at the way the Press are abusing my appointment...I did not accept this great office without long and anxious consideration...I was prepared for hostile criticism, but I thought that my long public service might have saved me from the personal abuse which has been showered upon me. I bear no resentment, and only pray that I may be enabled ere long to show my abusers that they were wrong." And no doubt, within the short time of three years that Mayo ruled this country, he did prove that his critics were after all wrong.

### INTERNAL REFORMS

#### Financial Reforms

Lord Mayo took the oath of the high office of Viceroy on 12 January 1869. And the most important of the problems he was called upon to face in his internal administration related to the financial affairs. The circumstances at the time of his arrival in India were precarious. The conquests and annexations of a full century before 1857, had left the British with an empire in India as large as about the size of all Europe excluding Russia. There were

200 million people in the British Provinces, and 50 million in the Feudatory States, whose arbiter of fate the British became. But this great achievement was not made without a cost. In 1869-70 the public debt stood at 102 million sterling; besides another debt of 91 million sterling which the government had incurred from the guaranteed railways and some other productive public works. Of the fifty-five years ending with 1868-69, as many as thirty-nine had shown only a deficit. And of all these, the period that immediately preceded Mayo represented perhaps the most discouraging phase of the problem with deficits of as much as 11 million sterling which came from the 'ordinary' as well as the 'extra-ordinary' expenditure. No less serious was the problem of the Budget estimates which, though framed every year with the utmost care that was permissible under the existing system, habitually were proved false by the results. Thus, from 1867 to 1869 the two years' budget estimates had shown an aggregate surplus of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million, while the actual results showed a deficit of almost the same amount. Certainly there was something seriously wrong with the existing financial machinery, which could produce an error as large as of 7 million sterling in the budget estimates. All this had to be corrected.

There was thus a three-fold task before Lord Mayo. First, he had to grapple with a deficit which had occurred in just the preceding year of his rule. Secondly, he had to reform the whole financial machinery so that the budget estimates were not falsified by actual results. And thirdly, he had to adopt certain measures which would place the country's finances on a sound footing for the future. The success of his measures was proved from the fact that in the very first year of his administration he established an equilibrium in the Indian finances, with a small surplus, followed by three years of a definite aggregate surplus of  $5\frac{3}{4}$  million; the first instance of a continuous four years of surplus after Lord Dalhousie.

Sir Richard Temple, the Finance Member, framed the first very cautious budget under the guidance of Mayo in 1869-70, estimating a surplus of £ 48, 263. Despite all the precautions, however, it was soon discovered that the existing machinery was incapable of producing the planned results. Richard Temple had left for England shortly after presenting the budget, and soon Mayo developed suspicion that the estimates were after all going to be falsified once again. He ordered a re-examination, which resulted in the information that instead of the above surplus, he was going to have a deficit of as much as £ 1,650,000. But with all the will-power at his command, Mayo declared : "I am determined not to have another deficit, even if it leads to the diminution of the Army, the reduction of Civil Establishments, and the stoppage of Public Works." And with the help of John Strachey, as capable as Richard Temple, he determined to attack the problem from two directions. First, that without waiting for the end of the year the impending deficit should

immediately be met with, and secondly, that the permanent causes of this repeated tragedy should be removed.

Towards the first direction, Lord Mayo curtailed the evergrowing grant for public works, and reduced grants for departments which had received a rapid development during the preceding decade and which could now wait for a while. This saved him an aggregate of £ 1,150,000. And for the rest of the deficit he had of resort to an "unprecedented expedient of additional taxation in the middle of the year." The rate of income-tax was raised, and salt duties were enhanced in Bombay and Madras during the later half of the year, and this brought him an aggregate revenue of £ 500,000. Thus was the deficit for 1869-70 met.

But these measures were extraordinary : both the curtailment of expenditure on public works and additional taxation in the middle of the year. Permanent solution of the problem had to be sought. And this Mayo did by introducing reforms which could be divided into three parts. First, those which related to the improvement of the financial machinery of the Centre itself. Second, those which aimed at the enforcement of a rigid economy on the provincial governments in framing their estimates. And with the increase of their financial responsibility, they were to get some financial powers which they did not so far enjoy. And third, those which aimed at a permanent and systematic readjustment between revenues and expenditure.

The most serious defect in the Central machinery was that the statistical material which daily poured in was not intelligently used, and there existed no proper provision for a cautious examination and collation of the accounts. A contribution towards this was also made by lack of punctuality in the local governments sending their estimates. Mayo made certain arrangements to see that the classification of statistics was made on a definite and systematic basis, and after this remedy in his own House he issued strict instructions that the local governments should send their estimates in time.

**Financial Devolution.** The second part of this reform action was more important, as it proved to be the beginning of that process which ultimately brought about a complete financial devolution in the country.

The question of the financial decentralisation which is very intimately connected with the development of the constitutional standard of the Government, is in fact one of the very interesting topics of modern Indian history. A commercial concern as it was, the East India Company had been very jealous of retaining all financial powers in the Centre. There was a general tendency towards centralisation in this respect which reached a high limit in the Charter Act

of 1833. But the climax was not reached till after the mutiny when the Crown took over, to face the situation of a shattered economy due to huge expenses of war and other factors, and strengthened its hold over provinces till the folly of it was recognised in the time of Lord Mayo, and the reverse process now commenced. A brief account of the developments before this is necessary.

We may start our discussions with the Charter Act of 1833 which deprived the provinces of all their powers of taxation and expenditure without a prior sanction of the Centre. The local governments were left with no powers. Strachey explained the situation well in the following words. "The whole of the revenues from all the provinces of British India were treated as belonging to a single fund, expenditure from which could be authorised by the Governor-General in Council alone...If it became necessary to spend £ 20 on a road between two local markets, to re-build a stable that had tumbled down, or to entertain a menial servant on wages of 10 shillings a month, the matter had to be formally reported for the orders of the Government of India." The Governor-General had the final authority in so far as no Presidency Government could create any new office, nor grant any salary, gratuity or allowance without his previous sanction.

Till the great Mutiny of 1857, however, though the Central control was sufficient, writes Bisheshwar Prasad, it "could not be thorough in practice. The tendency to keep a tight hold on their expenditure and thus to superintend effectively all departments of administration grew largely owing to post-Mutiny financial derangement." And this tendency continued till the Centre was fully entrenched in its position and "the local governments had to depend upon it for every pie they spent."<sup>1</sup> There were several reasons for this.

It was the Centre which was responsible for the solvency of the Empire. And the constant wars had affected the budget to such an extent that out of the twenty-five preceding years as many as eighteen were only deficit years. Then there were requirements of the administration which everyday grew complex. The political "relations with the states within the orbit of British paramountcy or with foreign territories needed one supreme guiding control."<sup>2</sup> There was need of administrative uniformity all over the country. It was the Centre which was responsible for the financial dealings of India to the Secretary of State whose control over the Indian affairs increased with the growing means of communication. Nor could the Centre afford to lose its credit and confidence of the British capitalists whose increasing investment in the public works of India was necessary. It was also necessary that due arrangements be made and due

1. Bisheshwar Prasad, *The Origin of Provincial Autonomy* (1941), p. 30.

2. *ibid.*, p. 18.

precautions taken after the Mutiny to save India from any other such conflagration. And then, as Sir H.M. Durand wrote, when "all control by the people is entirely ignored, the only real control that remains is that of the Central Government."<sup>1</sup> If the people had no power, the provinces could not get it either. These were the reasons which necessitated financial centralisation.

But there were defects in the system which could not be tolerated for long. Since the provinces secured fixed grants for fixed purposes, they always tried to see that the grants were larger than requirements; and once the grants were secured they had to be expended, so that there was no thrift and economy and the money was wasted. Nor was it easy for the Centre to scrutinise the large provincial accounts in detail. The scrutiny-burden was tremendously increasing and getting beyond the Centre's power to control. There was the vastness of the country with multifarious problems and a population with different local languages and different social and economic structures. It was utterly difficult for the Centre to understand the details of the provincial administrative requirement which mainly concerned finance. In such a system there was inevitable delay, and friction between the Centre and the provinces, the former permitting less while the latter demanded more. Nor were all the provinces treated on merit. The most violent of the Governors had the best of the day, while patience and gentleness suffered. There was a general complaint that the Centre had some local prejudices which arose from its special affiliation to Bengal. Nor was this untrue. For till 1853 the Supreme Council drew only one member from Madras, while Bombay had no representation at all. Not only this, often the local governments were asked to bring their systems to conform to that of Bengal which was always resented. Then there was the charge of partiality towards the northern provinces levelled by Madras. And the provinces asserted that so long as the Central hold over expenditure lasted, no local improvements were possible.

When a Parliamentary enquiry in the subject was held during 1852-53, every witness came out with arguments against the centralisation of finances, and pleaded that more powers should be granted to the local governments. But no heed was paid, and the Government of India Act 1858 declared that "the expenditure of the revenues of India shall be subject to the control of the Secretary of State in Council; and no grant or appropriation of any part of such revenues...shall be made without the concurrence of a majority of votes at a meeting of the Council." If the Government of India's powers were thus limited, the powers of the provincial governments simply could not exist.

1. Minute by Sir H.M. Durand, 7 October 1867, quoted by Eshwari Prasad, p. 96.

The efforts towards decentralisation, however, continued, and Wilson, Laing and Sir John Strachey played an important role in this respect, till ultimately the Government of India were moved and in 1870 Lord Mayo took certain steps towards the direction. The Government of India's Resolution of 14 December 1870 declared, "it is expedient that, as far as possible the obligation to find the funds necessary for administrative improvement should rest upon the authority whose immediate duty it is to devise such measures." And now therefore certain powers were transferred to the provinces.

The provinces were given certain heads of expenditure such as Police, Education, Registration, Jails, Medical Services, Printing, Roads, Civil Buildings and Public Improvements. In addition to the revenue derived from these sources, they were to get some additional grants for their administration which could be further supplemented by the provinces themselves from local taxation if they had a deficit, and if they did not want to reduce their expenditure. The unspent amount was, however, to lapse to the Centre, though it would still remain in the possession of the provinces. The local governments were also authorised to make appointments up to a monthly salary of Rs 250.

By taking these steps, the Governor-General hoped that it "will produce great care and economy: that it will import an element of certainty into fiscal system which has hitherto been absent; and that it will lead to more harmony in action and feeling between the Supreme and Provincial Governments than has hitherto prevailed." It was expected to make the local governments more serious in their improvement works, strengthen the municipal institutions to the satisfaction of the people, and develop association between the Europeans and the Indians.

There is no doubt that the above hopes to some extent were fulfilled. And the local governments began to feel their responsibility more keenly. Certain amount of economy also resulted from it, and the Central requirement of strict and burdensome scrutiny was reduced. The Secretary of State approved the plan, though he clearly let it be known that the arrangement was only experimental, and was "subject to revision, either in principle or detail."

The system, however, still continued suffering from some defects which were not removed. The local governments still had to submit their accounts and estimates for an audit and inspection and it was not always easy to satisfy the Centre with regard to their requirements. The provision that the surplus would lapse to the Centre was no good inducement to the local governments towards economy and thrift. Nor could the provision that they could make appointments only up to Rs 250 a month make them

proud. Then the provincial assignment covered only the heads of expenditure, no good independent sources of income were assigned to them, and as a result the stronger and more advanced provinces benefited more than the weak ones which were penalised "for their respective economy, unassertiveness and still worse backwardness." The grants were made on the bases of the year 1870-71, comparatively a year of financial stringency, and they were not to vary according to needs. Under the system, every province had to impose new taxes to augment its revenues, which increased pressure on the soil. And then as Sir Charles Trevelyan wrote, "no self-adjusting principle is provided between the services which have been transferred to the local governments and those which have been retained by the Central Government or rather between funds applicable to each." While in one there was a surplus, the other could suffer from a deficit and there could be no adjustment.

Still there were distinct advantages that the new scheme conferred as we have already seen. The importance of the new scheme did not lie in the height to which the financial decentralisation had attained. It was rather important that the first step towards the direction had been taken. Mayo had the credit of setting the ball rolling, it was bound ultimately to reach its destination.

The third aspect of the reforms by Mayo related to an adjustment between expenditure and revenue. This was made firstly, by economy and retrenchment, and secondly, by certain new taxes. Every department of expenditure was thoroughly scrutinised, and reduced to the lowest limit which could guarantee efficiency in a due manner. And this economy was reinforced by additional revenue from income-tax which had already been proposed by Lawrence and was actually imposed by Mayo, and from salt, duty on which was equalised in certain provinces. New source of salt supply were developed and the cost of its carriage was cheapened. The net result of all this was that "notwithstanding the new income-tax, the total revenue which he levied from India during his three years of office averaged nearly a million less than the revenue levied during the year 1868-69 preceding his Viceroyalty; while the expenditure averaged about five millions per annum less than that of the year preceding his Viceroyalty."<sup>1</sup>

The Financial Secretary to the Government of India thus summed up the general results of Mayo's financial reforms: "He found serious deficit, and left substantial surplus. He found estimates habitually untrustworthy; he left them thoroughly worthy of confidence. He found accounts in arrear, and statistics incomplete; he left them punctual and full. He found the relation between the local governments and the Supreme Government in an unsatisfactory

1. Hunter, W.W., *The Earl of Mayo*, pp. 143-155.



condition. He left the local government working with cordiality...He found the Financial Department conducted with a general laxity; he left it in vigorous efficiency."

### Other Reforms

Of his other reforms majority of which were aimed at saving more and more money, some related to army. The main principle of Mayo's policy here was to reduce expenditure with the least retrenchment of men and no reduction in their financial prospects, and this he thought could best be done by amalgamating different regiments so that the number of their separate headquarters and administrations was reduced without any reduction in men. His proposals aimed at a saving of £948,253 a year on this account. The Home Government, however, accepted as much of these reforms as saved £591,440 instead. Despite this reduction in expenditure, however, during his time better weapons were supplied to the army, and greater efficiency was introduced. He also made provisions for the children and orphans of the British soldiers in India.

In order to have a first-hand knowledge of the Indian problems, Mayo undertook extensive tours of this country involving 21,763 miles of journey. One of the causes of extravagance he discovered in Public Works was their construction out of borrowed money. The lack of proper supervision was another. To remedy this he enforced the principles of first finding money, and improved supervision.

Due attention was paid to the protection of the people against famines, by undertaking the construction of railways and completion of irrigation works. Under the old system railway lines were constructed in India by private companies under the Government of India's guarantee. "The money," as Duke of Argyll wrote, "was raised on the credit and authority of the State, under an absolute guarantee of five per cent, involving no risk to the shareholders, and sacrificing on the part of Government every chance of profit, while taking every chance of loss." There was a lack of economy, and the construction cost £17,000 per mile of railway line. Lord Mayo introduced the system of State railway, under which Government raised the capital at three to four per cent interest in place of five per cent and the cost of construction per mile was considerably reduced.

The Ganges Canal was extended, and for the first time after seventeen years it was removed from the category of burdensome works. Mayo also commenced a new system of irrigation which started from the Ganges opposite Aligarh, and was to irrigate the whole of the lower portion of the Doab from Allahabad to Fatehgarh.

1. See Hunter, *op. cit.*, Mallet, Bernard, *Thomas George Earl of Northbrook*, p. 19; Ambedkar, B.R., *Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*.



Efforts were also made to free the western districts of Oudh and the eastern half of Rohilkhand from famine and drought by constructing the Sarda Canal. Canals from the Ganges were planned for the same purpose in the western Rohilkhand. The works on the Lower Jumna Canal were pushed forward, a vast extension for the Western Jumna Canal was planned, and plans for a project to bring the waters of the Jumna for the arid tracts on the west of Delhi were got sanctioned from the Secretary of State. Besides, similar works on the Godavari, the Soane, etc. were undertaken. And several other works of public utility were pushed ahead in different provinces.

In the field of education, Lord Mayo disliked the 'filtration theory' under which it was thought that the higher education should be better looked after, so that through the few who would receive the education, knowledge would filter down to the masses. Mayo himself wrote to a friend: "nothing has been done towards extending knowledge to the millions. The Babus will never do it. The more education you give them, the more they will keep to themselves, and make their increased knowledge a means of tyranny." Mayo asserted that State education in this country must depend on broad basis of the indigenous and village schools, and special facilities should be provided for certain classes such as Mahommedans. Efforts were also made to provide educational facilities for the poor classes of the European community in India. And special attention was paid to the education of the children of the Indian princes so that they may develop into worthier pilots of the destinies of their people.

The first census of all India was taken under the orders of Lord Mayo. Statistical Survey of India was organised to collect information regarding the social and economic life of the people. A Department of Agriculture and Commerce was established to handle trade as well as agriculture. Among its duties was to help the people develop the resources of their land through cash advances and irrigation works. The Department was also to handle the State forests.

### **Local Self-Government**

Lord Mayo also loved to develop local self-government, and one of the purposes of his resolution of 1870 concerning the provincial finance, in his own words, was that it, "in its full meaning and integrity will afford opportunities for the development of self-government, for strengthening the Municipal Institutions, and for the association of Natives and Europeans, to a greater extent than hitherto, in the administrative affairs." The main object was summed up as: "The object in view being the instruction of many peoples and races in a good system of administration." A brief study of the earlier conditions and the changes introduced under Mayo may be given.

"While Central control over local bodies may increase in the interests of efficiency, a vigorous system of local self-government is still indispensable for the success of democracy."<sup>1</sup> And this fact was perhaps nowhere better understood than in the India of the Hindu age. Writes Lindsay, the "Story of local self-government in British India reveals a long drawn-out effort to retain what was good in existing institutions and to re-impose them where necessary by ideas which had been proved to be useful in England,"<sup>2</sup> in which effort, we might supplement Lindsay, the British not unoften, due to their half-heartedness, more spoiled than improved the situation.

In the villages of ancient India, the village communities under which the whole village was a self-sufficient common brotherhood with its own artisans to supply its needs and menials to serve the community, was an essential feature. Each village used to have its own government run through a *Panchayat*, which handled the entire business, executive as well as judicial; the chief functionaries being the village headman, an accountant, watchman and a school-master. The village officers and artisans were paid by shares in the village produce, or by grants of land, though later in the Mughal times the cash payments also began to be introduced. And in every business the final word always lay with the *Panchayat*, the most important feature of which was that it decided the matters not by a majority vote which at that time was not known at all, but by mutual discussions and adjustment; the idea of *Panch Parmeshwar* was not only believed in, but was also followed.

By the time the British rule was, however, introduced the relation between a ruler and the villagers being purely fiscal, as Moreland<sup>3</sup> writes, the tremendous pressure exercised on the peasants by illegal exactions and oppression led slowly to the decadence of the village life, so that the British had only to pick up the remnants of it and make of it as best as possible.

But above the villages, so far as the system of Rural Boards was concerned, everything had to be imported from England. In the old system there was no link between the villages and the higher authorities, but that of revenue. But now this link supposed to be insufficient, new link had to be forged, its essential principles being imported from abroad with the hope that it would be as successful here as in England; though with the half measures that were adopted, the results belied this hope and the pattern created was rather that which obtained on the continent of Europe in which local bodies were strictly controlled by the officials.

1. Sharma M.P., *Local Self-Government in India*, p. 8.
2. Lindsay J.H., *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 511.
3. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Modern India*, Chapter VIII.

Nor was the system thus evolved before the year 1870 uniform all over. As the character of the efforts of the different local governments varied, so did the local people, their life and conditions. So in every province, its own type of rural bodies developed. In Bombay, for instance, the Act III of 1869 passed by the Bombay Council empowered the Bombay government to provide funds to be spent on works of local public utility, and for the use of these funds to constitute local committees. The committees were soon thus constituted, one each for a district, and below district for every *taluka* and district sub-division; the members in each being nominated with the local official as their head. And considerable funds were placed at their disposal.

In Bengal, on the other hand, the Government deciding by its regulations XIX of 1816 and VI of 1819, to manage ferries itself, and use the surplus proceeds for the construction of local public utility works such as roads and bridges, appointed local committees with district magistrates as secretaries to study the needs of each district so that the funds granted were properly used. But these committees were not authorised themselves to use money.

In many parts of the country funds for public utility were raised by a cess which was fixed at the time of the land revenue settlement. And the money thus collected was expended by the district officers who were helped by committees consisting both of the Indians and the Englishmen, but whose personal opinion worked the most.

Thus before 1870, though efforts were made to constitute rural committees for the purpose of public utility works, these committees were neither powerful nor representative, nor was their constitution uniform all over the country, nor their funds rich. Some steps towards this direction were taken only in the time of Lord Mayo, under the directions of his Resolution of 1870, as already referred to.

The significant point in the Resolution was its emphasis that local subjects such as sanitation, medical relief and education should be developed through local governments, local bodies, and local taxation like cesses on the land revenue for rural areas. The provincial governments soon moved, and within a few years Acts were passed to legalise these cesses, or to add them where they did not exist. District committees were established all over the country, on the line of those existing in the Bombay Presidency, as we have mentioned above, for the use of these funds; though the Indian members in the Bengal Legislative Council having protested against these cesses, here they were raised only for the construction of roads necessary for the famine administration and not for education and other purposes.

Thus, for the first time definite legal steps were taken towards the development of the Rural Boards, though the committees thus set up

were still far from being democratic and effective. Being controlled and conducted by government officials, they looked for inspiration towards the higher government authorities and not towards the people. Nor did the members evince much interest in these activities, for they neither represented the people nor did they very much aspire to serve them. Their meetings were poorly attended, and therefore, instead of lightening the work of the district officers, they often added to it. Mayo's administration enjoyed the credit of taking a significant step towards the development of the local self-governing institutions.

Another important development in the time of Mayo was the Bombay Municipal Act of 1872, which, in the field of town administration, remained for years a source of inspiration to others. The development of Bombay had been similar to those of the other Presidency towns upto 1856, with the difference that as against the Act of 1840 for Calcutta, and Act of 1841 for Madras, there was the Act of 1845 for Bombay which concentrated powers in the hands of a Conservancy Board on which were appointed 2 Europeans, 3 Indians and a senior magistrate of police as its chairman. The Bombay Act XXV of 1858 empowered Bombay to levy town-taxes, and in return to pay a part of the cost of police force. It had also to set aside definite funds to repay for the Vehar Water Works.

The Bombay Municipal Act of 1865 however introduced important changes and appointed Justices of Peace whose number would be 500, and who would constitute a body corporate with control over budget. All the executive powers, however, were concentrated in the hands of chairman who was to be a highly paid government official. Due to some financial scandals in the old system, now a special comptroller of accounts was appointed, who was to be independent of the chairman, and whose signature was necessary for any expenditure.

But the system could not work smoothly. The number of the Justices was too large to handle the business properly; the chairman became unpopular because of his tendency to carry on the work without the support of the corporation, and the comptroller became ineffective as having subordinated himself to the chairman. The liberals led by Pherozechah Mehta raised a strong demand for change.<sup>1</sup>

Hence the Bombay Municipal Act of 1872 was passed which reduced the strength of the corporation to 64 members, 16 of whom were to be elected by the resident judges, 16 to be nominated by the government, and the rest of the 32 to be elected directly by the rate-payers. The executive powers were concentrated in the hands of the Commissioner, but provision was made for weekly audit of accounts

1. See Tinker Hugh, *Foundations of Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma*, pp. 37, 41.

by a standing committee of the corporation which would be known as the Town Council, and for monthly audit by specially appointed paid auditors.

This system worked so well that later on no radical changes were made in it. Thus Bombay was "The first to solve satisfactorily the problem of successful local self-government, not on model of the English system, but in a manner evolved by and for itself."<sup>1</sup>

*The Royal Visit.* To Lord Mayo also had the privilege of presenting for the first time a son of the English sovereign to the people and princes of India. His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh visited this country, and the people exhibited "an outburst of loyalty such as had never before been awakened in the history of our role," thus writes W.W. Hunter.

### RELATIONS WITH INDIAN STATES

Lord Mayo's relations with the Indian princes were cordial. After the Mutiny, the principle had been established that the 50 millions of the population under the feudatory chiefs was now an integral part of British Empire for whose welfare the Queen took up the responsibility. Thus, though the direct annexation of their territories was to be avoided, the British were to see that the princes ruled them properly. Lord Mayo worked on this policy honestly. He frankly declared to the princes : "If you wish to be a great man at my court, govern well at home. Be just and merciful to your people....And in our private friendship and hospitality, we shall prefer the smallest Feudatory who rules righteously, to the greatest Prince who misgoverns his people."

His policy towards these princes was based on four principles, non-annexation, constant feeling of responsibility for the welfare of the people under their control, non-interference with those princes who rule efficiently, and education of the younger princes under British officers so as to develop a spirit of responsibility in them.

Thus for instance, when he saw a gross misrule in Kathiawar, instead of annexation he made every effort to reform the administration of that territory. Similarly despite the most corrupt and irresponsible behaviour of the Chief of Alwar, instead of annexing his territory, or completely dispossessing him of his privileges, he saw that the administration of the State was properly carried on.

On the other hand the rulers of the states like Bhopal, who ruled efficiently, were honoured. The Mayo College at Ajmer was opened,

1. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 527; Anand, C. L.; *op. cit.*, pp. 146-86.
2. Hunter, W.W., *op. cit.*, p. 185.

with the Council of the College which consisted of the princes of Rajputana and the British Political Agents accredited to their states. The Viceroy himself was the President of this Council. The purpose of this College was to educate the young princes of Rajputana under the British supervision.

### WAHABI AND THE KUKA MOVEMENT

Lord Mayo's period of administration witnessed a vigorous development in almost every sphere of life. Apart from some violent measures which the Viceroy had to adopt in order to bring about discipline in the country's budgetary conditions, his step towards financial decentralisation and permission to the provinces to supplement their funds by local taxation if necessary, led to the imposition of several new taxes both by the centre and the provinces, the kind of which the people had never known before. There is no doubt that much of the local taxation like the education cess on land was meant only for local uplift, the pace adopted in the activities was supposed to be so fast that a work of half a century was sought to be compressed within a span of only four years. The people wedded to the traditional habits and beliefs, however, were not educated and made ready either to receive unprecedented amount of direct taxation or to appreciate the reform activities which were to their benefit. The result was large scale discontent and an upsurge of antagonistic feelings which took the form of organised movements to overthrow the British rule. Two such movements were the Wahabi and the Kuka, both of which existed earlier, but both got a great fillip from Mayo's activities. There were murders of important English officials and much violence to which Mayo himself ultimately fell a victim. The suspicions of the affiliation of the Muslim murderer of Mayo to the Wahabi Movement could not be proved, yet what the enquiries conclusively established was that the Indian discontent existed in forms other than Wahabism and Kukaism as well. This brought about much anxiousness and fear for English safety in the country, and proved to be the prime determinant of the policy of Mayo's successor Lord Northbrook who was convinced that the country needed rest from the vigorous activity that had gone on since the Mutiny, and who therefore took immediate measures to lighten the burden of direct taxation and reduced the pace of the developmental work to a considerably low level. We take the opportunity of having a short account of the history, progress and beliefs of the Wahabi and the Kuka Movements here.

#### Wahabi Movement

The Wahabi Movement originated in India with one Syed Ahmed who belonged to Rae Bareilly. It had no direct contacts with the movements of that name which was organised in the eighteenth century in Arabia, but began to be termed as the Wahabi Movement

of India because of its beliefs similar to those of the Wahabi of Arabia. Syed Ahmed of Rae Bareilly, who declared himself *Paghambar*, started an agitation against idolatry and superstitions among the Muslims. He particularly played on the innocent fanaticism of the Muslim masses, an ample measure of which was available in the Muslim tribes on India's north-west frontier. These frontier territories therefore became a centre of his activities.

On the north-west frontiers of India, Syed Ahmed got his great opportunity when Ranjit Singh, the ruler of Punjab, wrested Peshawar from the Afghans. He visited the frontier areas occasionally, and large funds collected from the Indian Muslims, began to travel those areas to inflame the tribal feelings against the Sikhs. So long as Syed Ahmed continued his activities far away on Ranjit Singh's frontiers and tried to keep the warring Sikhs busy away from their Sutlet border, the British had no objection. There were rather rumours to the effect that Syed Ahmed was a British puppet by whom he was actively helped and encouraged against the Sikhs. Be that as it may, for a time in 1827, Syed Ahmed was able to create a formidable problem for the Sikhs. He declared a *jehad*, enlisted the support of a large number of the frontier Muslims, and actually occupied Peshawar, setting aside the Sikh Governor, Yar Mohammad from his office. Hari Singh Nalwa, the famous Sikh General, marched his troops defeated Syed Ahmed at Saidu, and reconquered Peshawar. Peace seemed to have been restored, when after some time there was an upsurge in Syed's activities again, Yar Mohammad was murdered, and Peshawar once again went outside the Sikh control. The town seemed to have been lost once for all, and there was much rejoicing among the Syed's follower. But their success was shortlived. General Ventura despatched by Ranjit Singh, killed Syed and reconquered the Afghan city, never again to be lost by the Punjab.

The Wahabis were defeated at Peshawar, but the Movement instead of meeting its death, adopted a different shape thereafter. The Wahabis believed that Syed would re-incarnate, and making Patna their centre, started to organise themselves once again. After the conquest of the Punjab by the British in 1849, the Movement became anti-British, but since their *Maulvis* and the holy Koran told them that a *jehad* could not be fought by a subject people against its own Government, the supplies of men and money collected from the Muslims of Bengal and Bihar who fell under their influence in considerable numbers, began to be sent to Multa Sittana on the frontiers where preparation to fight was apace. The Wahabis on the frontiers did not take their opportunity during the mutiny in 1857 for fear of reprisal against their families in India. But, that the Movement actually became formidable is proved from the fact that an expedition had to be sent against them in 1862, and again in 1868. The Punjab Government were also instructed to enquire as to how



the Indian money was remitted across the frontiers. There were formidable Wahabi settlements at places like Ambala in that province, and the Punjab Government were instructed to destroy them. Large number of Wahabi arrests were made, and their leaders were sentenced to long-term imprisonments.

It is in these circumstances that Mayo appeared in India. His taxation and general administrative policy, aimed at breaking up the traditional Indian habits and practices, developed discontent which fed the Wahabi ranks. The Wahabis and the persons who looked like them, began to be arrested in large numbers and exemplary punishments began to be awarded to them, particularly after the police reports that *jehad* was being preached against the British. Between 1869 and 1871 large numbers of official prosecutions were filed. Justice Norman of the Calcutta High Court "had rejected an application for a writ of *habeas corpus* made on behalf of one of the leading prisoners, Amir Khan, and he was about to hear an appeal against his conviction and four others when he was assassinated.<sup>1</sup> "The assassin was said to be undoubtedly connected with the Wahabis."

Lord Mayo, however, reached the conclusion that mere retaliatory measures against the Wahabis would not do. Direct taxation had brought about considerable discontent on which the Wahabis reacted. He reduced the income-tax twice and may also have persuaded the provinces to do likewise in the local taxation when he himself fell at the hands of a Muslim assassin as we shall see, in the following pages. The threads of the policy initiated by him, however, were picked up by his successor Lord Northbrook when income-tax was completely written off and the local taxes were modified. With this the popular discontent on this account disappeared, and the Wahabi Movement also began to grow weak.<sup>2</sup>

### The Kuka Movement

Exactly a month before the mutiny in Meerut, Guru Ram Singh founded on 12 April 1857 a socio-political sect called *Namdhari* in the Punjab. These Namdharis, while reciting Sikh *mantras* or repeating the Name, often developed emotions, screamed and shouted, turbans in their hands and hair streaming in the wind and were named *Kukas* or the shouters.

Born in 1815 at the village Bheni Arayian in district Ludhiana, Ram Singh was the son of a poor carpenter Jussa Singh. He learnt how to read and write the *Gurmukhi* script, married in 1822 and

1. Moulton, Edward, *Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration 1872-1876*, p. 5.
2. See McGregor, *History of Sikhs*, I, p. 196; Gopal, S., *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, p. 96-99.



enlisted himself in Prince Naunihal Singh's army at the age of 22. He came under the influence of Balak Singh, a social reformer, in 1838. In 1847 he started preaching against some bad social practices among the Sikhs. He condemned the Sodhis and Bedis belonging to the line of the Sikh Gurus and who were worshipped. He also condemned the influence of the Hindu Brahmanas and the Muslim Pirs on the Sikhs and insisted upon the latter receiving baptism as perscribed by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs.

In 1857, on the day of *Baisakhi* Ram Singh founded his Namdhari movement, in his own village Bheni, where four Sikhs received baptism at his hands to start with. He fixed 22 preaching centres in different parts of the province, and in each one of them he appointed a deputy called *suba* to preach. Besides, the *subas* were also appointed in Gwalior, Hyderabad Deccan, Benaras, Lucknow, Nepal and Kabul. The institution of *subas* was completed by 1864, and they went about preaching Ram Singh's message from place to place.

In the beginning the districts of Sialkot, Amritsar, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana formed chief centres of the Namdhari activities, but later on they spread to Ferozepur, Lahore and Gujranwala as well. Not only the Sikhs joined this movement in great numbers, the Hindus were also attracted and by 1871, as it was revealed by Giani Rattan Singh in the court of Mr Cowan the Kukas numbered ten lakhs of whom only one-third were *Kesadharis*,<sup>1</sup> the rest being all *Sehjdharis*.<sup>2</sup>

Ram Singh never told his followers to beg and move about unemployed as mendicants. The Kukas were to be found in all sorts of profession. They were businessmen, traders and merchants, and employed in government and private services. They were found especially in the Police and Army where it was difficult to ascertain their numbers, because they joined these services with a purpose and never revealed their Kuka affiliations.

As the time passed, the pomp and splendour of Ram Singh grew. When he went on tours his entourage consisted of a number of his *subas* and splendid horsemen, all in beautiful white dress. His followers began to call him a *Guru*, a successor in the line of Guru Nanak, and although in his letters addressed from Rangoon in exile he openly condemned the practice in the initial stages, he does not seem to have done so strictly and therefore his importance among the Kukas comparable to that of the ten Sikh Gurus developed. Ram Singh died in 1885, in exile in Burma.

1. Those wearing long hair.

2. Those not wearing long hair.

The prominent features of his doctrines are

“He abolished all distinctions of caste among Sikhs; advocates indiscriminate marriage of all classes; enjoins the marriage of widows; enjoins abstinence from liquor and drugs; but advocates much too free intercourse between the sexes; men and women rave together at his meetings, and thousands of women and young girls have joined the sect; he exhorts his disciples to be clean and truthful. One of his maxims says : it is well that every man carries his staff, and they all do. The *Granth* is their only accepted volume. The brotherhood may be known by the tie of their *pagris*, *sidha pag*, by a watchword, and by a necklace of knots made in a white woollen cord to represent beads, and which are worn by all the community.” They had no respect for tombs and temples and were also iconoclasts.<sup>1</sup>

Religiously the Kukas were somewhere between the Hindus and Sikhs. They were teetotallers, lived a simple life and wore only handmade and pure *swadeshi* clothes. Although vehemently denied by Ram Singh, unlike the Sikhs they believed in the divinity of the tenth *Guru* having descended upon *Guru Balak Singh*, then *Ram Singh*, *Hari Singh* and *Pratap Singh*. The Kukas were strict in wearing the five Sikh religious marks<sup>2</sup> and in observing the other Sikh essentials. In their social beliefs the Kukas were against child-marriage. They condemned infanticide and dowry system. The *Namdharis* in fact were religiously denied the right to spend more than Rs 13 on a marriage. This practice obtains among them even in the present times.

The Kukas gave strictly equal status to women and believed in intercaste marriage between caste Hindus and untouchables. The first such intercaste marriage was performed among the Kukas on 4 January 1863.

Writing in an article published in 1935, Dr Rajendra Prasad the late President of India commented : “*Guru Ram Singh* considered political freedom a part of religion. The organisation of the *Namdharis* became very strong. The principles of boycott and non-cooperation, which Mahatma Gandhi introduced so vigorously in our freedom movement were expounded by *Guru Ram Singh* for the *Namdharis*”.

The *Guru's* Non-cooperation movement was based on the following five principles.

1. Boycott of the Government services.

1. Chhabra, G.S., *Social and Economic History of the Punjab; Original Home*, 1872 judicial, Aug-273-274, pp. 2444-2449.
2. *Kirpan* (dagger), *Kachcha* (breeches), *Kes* (hair), *Kara* (bangle) and *Kanj* a (comb).

2. Boycott of the educational institutions run by the British Government.
3. Boycott of the law established by them.
4. Boycott of the foreign clothings.
5. Disobedience of the Government orders which one's conscience abhorred.

And the Namdharis were so steadfast in these principles that even after the independence their Guru Maharaja Pratap Singh and his son sacrificed all the modern necessities of life introduced by the British Government.

The Namdharis had their own postal system in operation in all the parts of the Punjab, which worked efficiently under time schedule and which was abandoned only after independence.

To keep his disciples under direct control, Bhai Ram Singh had appointed *subas* and *naib-subas* majority of whom were in the districts of Amritsar, Sialkot, Jullundur, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Ambala and Karnal, and in the States of Maler Kotla, Nabha, Patiala and Sangrur.

The Kukas also enlisted themselves in great numbers in the State police and in the army, and got thereby a military training to be used when required. When in such services, the Kukas did not reveal their identity. A special Kuka regiment was raised by the Maharaja of Kashmir which, later on at British intercession, was disbanded.

To make his political programme a success, Bhai Ram Singh spread his sphere of activity in Nepal, Bhutan, Kashmir and several other States, as already referred to. Contacts were made with these rulers through the Namdhari embassies. Bhai Ram Singh is also said to have been in contact with the Rani of Jhansi and other leaders of the 1857 Mutiny, and also exchanged letters with Russia through the Governor of the Russian Turkistan. The *Bhai* seems to have developed a belief that the Russians were bound to march on India, with whose help the British would be expelled from the country.

Qutab Khan, a British spy in the Russian Turkistan, thus supplied information to the Punjab administrators that a person named Guru Charan Singh, inhabitant of Chak Ram Dass in the Sialkot District, arrived at a particular place in the Russian Turkistan on 1 May 1879 with a letter in Hindi (Gurmukhi) purporting to be from Ram Singh, the Kuka leader, and signed by several others. This letter, as stated by the informer, began with "*Salams* to the Russian Emperor,

the Governor-General and the other Russian officers and went on to say that Ram Singh was the spiritual leader of 315,000 Kukas, all brave soldiers; that the tyrannical British Government had imprisoned him in Rangoon, but that his younger brother at Ludhiana kept him fully informed with what was going on, that the British were afraid of losing the Punjab to the Kukas..." which however was bound to happen.<sup>1</sup>

In the month of April 1881, Sir Robert Egerton the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab was pressing the government of India for the issue of a warrant under the provisions of Regulation III of 1818, "for the detention of Guru Charan Singh during the pleasure of his Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council."

Guru Charan Singh was already under arrest and detention at Lahore but the Punjab Government did not know any other way of keeping him under effectual restraint without trial, unless it was under Regulation III of 1818. In their opinion it was dangerous to leave Guru Charan Singh at large because he was acting as the medium of communication between the Russian administrator in Central Asia and the disaffected Kukas. With liberty to move freely he would lose no opportunity of recounting the honours conferred on him by the Russians and of enlarging on the benefits to be reaped by the Kukas in the event of the Russians obtaining possession of the Punjab. The Government of India ultimately agreed with this proposal.

In 1863 the conduct of the Kukas on the whole was reported to be orderly.<sup>2</sup> The Inspector-General of Police, Punjab, reported in 1867 that their number was on the increase, but that there was no danger to be apprehended from the spread of the sect.<sup>3</sup> In 1868 it was reported that Kukaism was on the decline and that the belief in Ram Singh's supernatural powers had been shaken by experiences of the converts.<sup>4</sup>

For many years the Kukas did nothing worse than defile or destroy shrines and idols and murder butchers and others whom they suspected of slaughtering kine. But the Kuka outbreak of Tera near Mukatsar in February 1869 and some other available facts, according to Deputy Commissioner of the Ambala district, proved beyond doubt that Kukaism aimed at the restoration of Sikh rule, and by necessity, the subversion of the British power.<sup>5</sup>

1. See Foreign (Secret), Jan. 1882, Cons. 558-599; Chhabra, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-31.

2. *Original Home*, 1872 judicial, August, 273-274, pp. 2444-2449, Chhabra *op. cit.*, pp. 129-32.

3. Author's *Social & Economic History of Punjab*, (1849-1901), pp. 129-31.

4. *Original Home*, 1872, judicial Aug., 273-274, pp. 2464-96; Chhabra, *op. cit.*

5. *ibid*, p. 2419; Chhabra, *op. cit.*

In 1871 the Kukas gathered at a conference at the village Khote in Ferozepur in which Ram Singh was present. But unfortunately here they were divided into two parties and despite Ram Singh's admonition, began to quarrel among themselves. Some Kukas got out of Ram Singh's control and attacked and murdered many butchers and others suspected of kine slaughter. On 4 June 1871, slaughter of the butchers took place in Amritsar, and on 16 July 1871 at Rajkot. Some Kukas were arrested and hanged, and many were punished with fines and imprisonment.

In 1872, however, there was a more serious outbreak. On 11 and 12 January the Kukas met at the village Bheni, where Ram Singh was present. After the conference, the Kukas dispersed, but some of them decided to attack Malerkotla and occupy it. Although Ram Singh seems to have informed the British authorities of it beforehand, the Kukas succeeded in creating trouble. L. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana and Forsyth, the Commissioner of the Ambala Division, took a serious view of it, and under their orders, 49 of the Kuka ring-leaders were executed.

Concerning Ram Singh, Forsyth, advised the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Punjab, recommended that he be deported to Burma. Maharaja of Patiala also wrote a letter to the effect. Consequently Lord Northbrook issued the required order. Ram Singh died during his exile in Burma in 1885.

It is said that the Kuka attack upon religious places, as they were iconoclasts, injured the feelings of their neighbours, "while pure morality which they at first preached had been superseded by the most unbridled license under the name of religious enthusiasms, men and women dancing naked together and indulging in orgies which had alienated the sympathies of the more decent portion of the community."

As revealed by Giani Ratan Singh, the Kukas numbered ten lakhs in 1871. According to the Punjab Census of 1891, however, they numbered only 10,541 throughout the province, the number having increased to 13,788 in the British territory alone by 1901.<sup>1</sup>

After Ram Singh succeeded Guru Hari Singh who was not allowed to move out of his house in the village Bheni for 21 years. He died in 1906, and was succeeded by Partap Singh. During the World War in 1914, the British Government tried to appease the Kukas by land grants and through some other means, but failed and had to use a tyrant's rod. In 1920 the Kuka started their paper *Satyug*, and in 1922 their daily *Kuka* was started. When the non-cooperation movement was started by Gandhiji the Kukas joined hands freely.

1. Panjab Census Report, 1901, pp. 136-137.

Gandhiji himself is said to have learnt many points from the Kukas, and modified his campaigns to revolutionise the social and political structure of India.

## RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN, KALAT, NORTH AND NORTH-EAST REGION

### Afghanistan

Lord Mayo wrote to Disraeli in 1869 : "I believe that if I am allowed to carry out my policy I shall be able to form round our frontier from Mekran coast to the confines of Northern Turkistan and Chitral a cordon of friendly and independent states whose interest it will be to keep well with the great British Raj."<sup>1</sup>

Afghanistan lay on this cordon, and we have seen how in the time of Sir John Lawrence the policy of 'Masterly Inactivity' had been followed towards this state. Lawrence had not intervened in the civil war that had ensued among the descendants of Dost Muhammad after his death. The contest for power lay between Sher Ali on the one hand, and Afzal, Azim and Abdul Rehman on the other. As the contestants occupied or yielded one part of the country or another, their *de facto* positions were recognised, till Sher Ali was able to re-assert his position and become an undisputed master of the whole country. Lawrence congratulated him, gave him arms and a subsidy to restore calm in the war-torn country, and invited him to pay a visit to India. Sher Ali made ready to pay the visit, when due to certain reasons he was detained and in the meanwhile Lawrence retired from India.

Lord Mayo, who succeeded Lawrence, continued his policy of watchful non-interference. The already planned visit of Sher Ali to India materialised in March 1869. He was received by Lord Mayo at Ambala with all the honour and respect due to him. At this meeting Sher Ali requested the Viceroy for a treaty by which he should be assured of a definite assistance in arms and men whenever he required it, a fixed annual subsidy, and a recognition by the British of his dynasty as the only rightful claimant to the Afghan throne. He further required of Lord Mayo that instead of Yakub Khan his elder son, Abdulah Jan his younger son, should be recognised as the heir-apparent. These demands, however, were too strong for Mayo to agree to, but since he had to retain the friendship of Sher Ali, he could extricate himself from this unenviable position only by diplomacy.

Sher Ali was made to understand clearly that the British could not bind themselves to any one dynasty in Afghanistan where politics

1. Gopal, S., *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, pp. 68-69.

was always on the shifting sands. But the Amir was given a written promise that the British would give their moral support together with gifts of money when they, according to their own judgement, deemed it proper. For his own person, the utmost the Amir was able to draw from the Viceroy was the promise that the British would "view with severe displeasure any attempts on the part of your rivals to disturb your position."

The important thing, however, is that the Amir left on the whole content and satisfied; and that was due to his being thoroughly impressed and charmed by the Viceroy's commanding personality, the strong British military resources, pomp and pageantry of the *Durbar*, and above all the diplomatic and psychological approach that the Viceroy was able to give to the whole subject.

To support the vague written promise, or to sweeten the refusal of his demands, Mayo gave the Amir two batteries of artillery, and some small arms. This impressed the Amir so much that he wrote to the Viceroy: "If it pleases God, as long as I am alive or as long as my Government exists, the foundation of friendship and goodwill between this and the powerful British Government will not be weakened."<sup>1</sup> The royal ceremonial treatment that Sher Ali received, led him to remark at Lahore: "I now begin to feel myself a King."

On the other hand, the Viceroy was also completely satisfied with the result. "He believed that if the policy of moral support and *ad hoc* assistance, which had been clearly explained to the Amir, were rigidly adhered to, the British might hope both to obtain a faithful ally for the first time since 1841 and to extend to Afghanistan a civilising influence, thus providing her with the possibility of a strong and merciful government."<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after, Mayo's policy towards Afghanistan was put to a test, when Sher Ali's son, Yakub Khan rebelled and seized Herat. The Viceroy was advised by some senior officers to send troops in support of Sher Ali, but with the approval of the Home authorities he desisted from this course, arguing that it would alienate Yakub, who was likely to become prominent in Afghanistan in the years to come, and any mishap to the troops sent would only compromise the British prestige as it happened during the First Afghan War. Luckily Yakub soon wrote to his father to be forgiven. Mayo took this opportunity and advised Sher Ali, who planned vengeance, to seek a settlement with his son. The Amir accepted the advice which made the Viceroy happy that the British had not lost a commanding influence in that country. But the Afghan ruler was wary of the

1. Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, pp. 141-42.

2. Gopal, S. *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, p. 68.



recently concluded friendship with the diplomatic Viceroy, reviving his memories of Lawrence's time, during which he had realised that the British looked to nothing but their own interests, and that to meet his internal trouble he would have in all events to do it alone.

Mayo like Lawrence, was advised to occupy Quetta to get a commanding position in the event of a Russian march. But he understood the futility of this course and remarked that he was 'sick of the nonsense talked about Russia'. An envoy of Yakub Beg of Yarkand had told him that at a signal the Muslims from the borders of China to the Caspian Sea could be incited to a *Jehad* (holy war). And Mayo was convinced that a few British agents and a few hundred thousand pounds spent judiciously by the British could also do the same job, and remarked : "I could make of Central Asia a hot plate for our friend the Bear to lance on."<sup>1</sup>

Mayo had to face an unpleasant situation in Afghanistan in another way also. The British diplomacy in Central Asia under Lawrence had been to keep Russia at arms length. But Mayo included in this category the countries of Turkey and Persia also. The Government of India said in a despatch in 1869 : "We believe that the establishment by Persia of a frontier conterminous with that of the British empire in India, would be an event to be deeply deplored...As our western frontier is now situated, we are comparatively free from the necessity of frequent communication with Persia, Turkey, Russia or any great Asiatic power." At the same time, as the despatch said : "British interests, influence, and power in Asia are best secured by a steady and constant adhesion to the policy of non-interference in the affairs of foreign states."<sup>2</sup>

*Dispute on Siestan* : A situation developed in Siestan which lay on the west of Afghanistan on the borders of Persia. Persia had some shadowy claims on these territories but the people of Siestan seemed by and large in favour of Afghanistan. So long as Dost Muhammad was alive, Siestan remained with him and Persia had not the courage to assert her claims. But as soon as he died and a civil war ensued among his descendants, Persia took advantage of the situation and wrote to the British to intercede on her behalf. Persia made this appeal to the British under the terms of the Treaty of Paris signed in 1857, the Article VI of which read, that "in case of differences arising between the Government of Persia and the countries of Herat and Afghanistan the Persia Government engage to refer them for adjustment to the friendly offices of the British Government and not take up arms unless those friendly offices fail to effect."<sup>3</sup> When,

1. *ibid.*, p. 70.

2. Prasad, Bisheshwar, *The Foundations of India's Foreign Policy, 1860-1882* p. 52.

3. *ibid.*, p. 59.

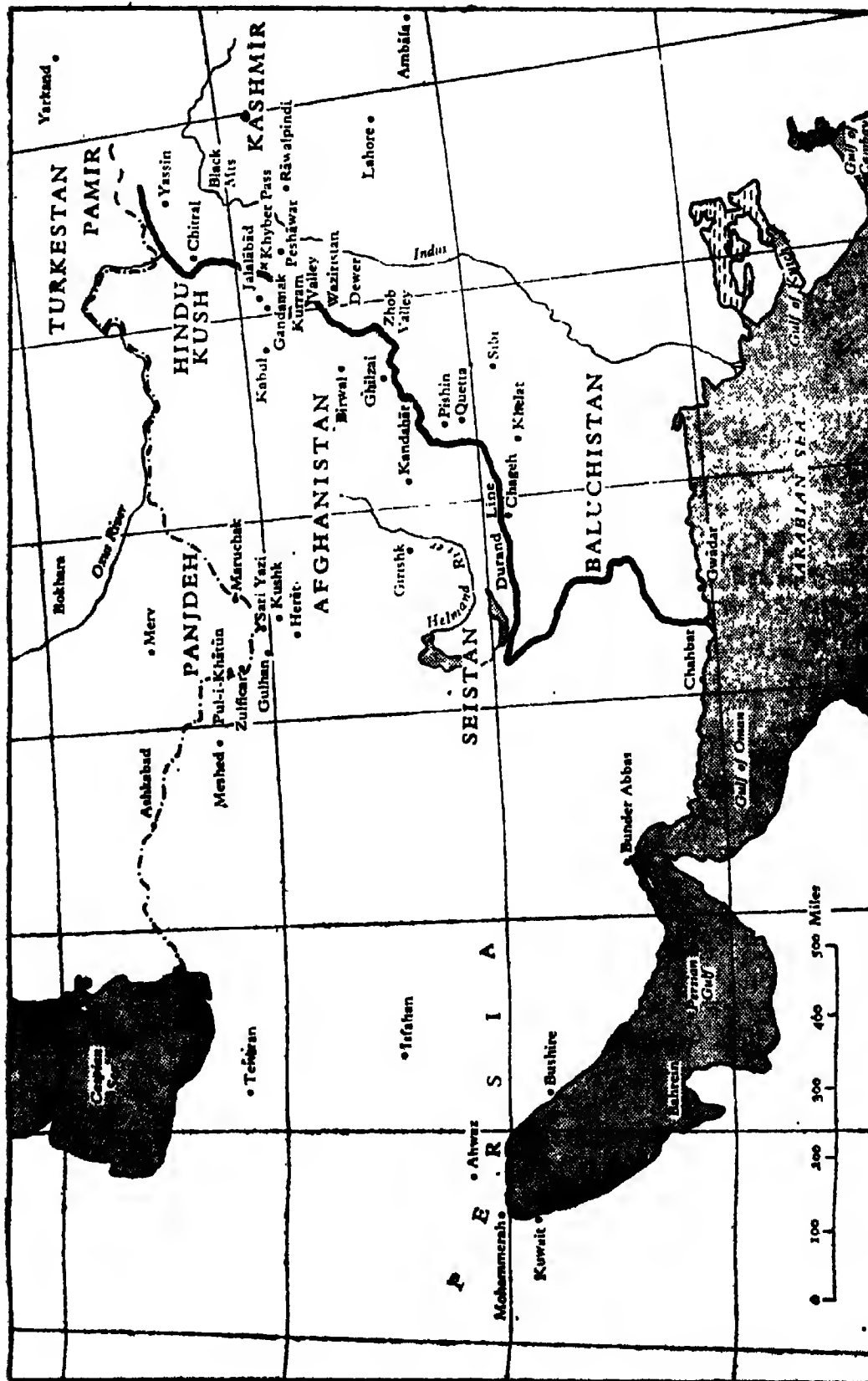
however, the appeal from Persia was received, the British did not as yet understand the strategic importance of the territories under dispute, or perhaps the bitter memories of the Afghan war were still fresh in their minds, and they wrote back to Persia of their disinclination to interfere, permitting that country to make good her claims by resort to arms if she wished. After receiving this reply, Persia marched her troops and taking advantage of the internal disorder in Afghanistan, occupied a large part of western Seistan. In the meanwhile Sir John Lawrence adopting his policy of 'Masterly Inactivity', the matter remained there till Sher Ali was able to defeat all his opponents and become undisputed master of Afghanistan once again.

As soon as Sher Ali consolidated his power in Afghanistan, he turned his attention to the question of Seistan where he was not prepared to suffer any territorial diminution. But before he took any precipitate step, in view of his friendly relations established with Mayo at Ambala in 1869, the Amir wanted to take the British advice and approval. On the other hand Persia also being apprehensive of Sher Ali's warlike designs, appealed to the Treaty of Paris once again and wanted the British intercession.

When Persia had first appealed to this Treaty in 1863, the British had not thought it advisable to intervene. But by the time Sher Ali recovered his power the situation had changed, and under the viceroyalty of Mayo, strategic importance of Seistan was realised. The valley of Helmand was very fertile, the Persian advance along it and her occupation of the whole of Seistan was not only likely to threaten the security of Herat, but way also would be cleared to Kandahar and the Bolan Pass to the ultimate risk of the British India itself. The Government of India remarked in 1870 that the Persian advance along Helmand "is far more formidable menace to Afghanistan than her advance upon Herat, which the British Government has spent so much blood and money to counteract, and which was finally checked by the Treaty of Paris of March 1857."<sup>1</sup>

In these circumstances when Persia appealed for the second time for intervention under the Treaty of Persia, the British decided to respond. But whereas Persia wanted the British to recognise her possession of the Western Seistan in which they had raised no objection in 1863, and arbitrate in his behalf on the basis of the present position the British who realised that their non-intervention in favour of Afghanistan in 1863 was already a mistake, were not prepared to suffer any such limitation. Persia ultimately acquiesced. On the other hand Afghanistan which did not know anything with regard to the Treaty of Paris, and was not bound to accept the British arbitration under any agreement, approached the British after the Ambala

1. *ibid. op. cit.*, p. 57.



**Central Asia**

meeting just out of courtesy, and she also agreed to the British arbitration.

General Goldsmid was appointed as an arbitrator. The instructions issued to him said, he was first to enquire into the Persian acquisitions since 1863, and starting from that point he would study the whole matter and decide it strictly in an impartial manner. His verdict was to be the verdict of the British Government. Obviously in the light of these instructions, and in the light of the views earlier expressed by the Mayo Government, the verdict was expected to tilt in favour of Afghanistan, but in the actual course of judgment, the British arbitrator adopted the middle line. Neither Persia was allowed to retain the whole of the occupied territory, nor Afghan rights on the whole of Seistan were vindicated. Both were thus displeased. But whereas Persia had to accept the verdict under the Treaty of Paris, the binding on Afghanistan was only that of friendship, or rather that of her weakness and inability to stand up to the British. But this could not stop the cordiality of Ambala from cooling down. Some say Sher Ali was disillusioned, and this sowed the seeds of the Second Afghan War. Whether this view is reasonable to take, we will have an occasion to examine under our study of the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton.

### Kalat

The other states which lay on the cordon that Lord Mayo wanted to form round the British Indian frontier, were Kalat and the Eastern Turkistan, which according to Mayo, were necessary to keep well disposed towards the British and safe from any foreign influence.

With Kalat the British had signed a treaty in 1842 under which they had "In case of an attack on Meer Nazeer Khan by an open enemy or any difference arising between him and any foreign power to afford him assistance or good offices as it may judge to be necessary or proper for the maintenance of his rights."<sup>1</sup> Under another treaty concluded in 1854, the Khan of Kalat undertook not to enter into negotiations with any power without the British consent, and also to permit the British troops to be stationed anywhere in his country, or to occupy any part of his dominions to fulfil the obligations the British had entered into with him.

The trial of these agreements, as also of the policy declared by Mayo, came in 1869 itself when the local governor of Bampur under the instructions of the Shah of Persia, marched into Makran and prepared to commence warlike operations against Kedj, Charbar and Gwadur which were tributaries of Kalat. Mayo had immediately to move, for if the situation worsened, he would have either to help

1. *ibid.*, p. 53.

Kalat against Persia or lose an ally who was a part of the cordon which the Viceroy was so anxious to keep. The war with Persia, however, was not advisable, for that state had to be weaned away from the Russian influence, and otherwise also, the British relations with it were not at the time bad. Mayo therefore immediately wrote to the Home authorities to take a timely step and ask Persia to accept British arbitration in the dispute as under the Treaty of Paris. The Foreign Office in England addressed itself to the Shah to this effect, but the latter resented such interference with the result that a tougher line had to be adopted. The Shah of Persia was frankly told that the British could not afford to remain unconcerned in the matter, and it was therefore necessary that they should give a friendly assistance to the two parties to remove the difficulties that had arisen between them. The Shah ultimately bowed and suggested the appointment of three commissioners, one each by himself, the British and the Khan of Kalat to demarcate the boundary between Kalat and the Persian Baluchistan.

Here also the British appointed General Goldsmid to do the job. Goldsmid surveyed the disputed area, and despite obstacles placed in his way by the Persian commissioner, was able to demarcate the boundary from Guattar to Kubak by 1871, which the Shah accepted. The boundary from Guattar to Seistan was later demarcated by the Holdich Commission in 1896.

### Eastern Turkistan

G.J. Alder writes: "Mayo hoped to create between the Russian and British territories a double layer of influenced but independent states acting as a cushion to lessen the mutual discomfort of direct contact between the two Empires." And he further comments: "Lawrence really had no policy which can be called 'Central Asian' in this sense, beyond the unvarying application of the rule that India had no interests there." Further, "Lawrence was prepared to watch unmoved while Russia expanded into the rest of Central Asia, Mayo sought to build an independent belt of territories to the north of Afghanistan."<sup>1</sup>

The contrast drawn by G.J. Alder between the two policies seems correct inasmuch as that whereas Lawrence had been satisfied with a cushion of only one layer of influenced states, Mayo wanted the cushion to constitute two layers, i.e. he wanted to go to the North of Afghanistan and press the Eastern and Western Turkistan also into that cushion, which Lawrence had thought unnecessary. But to conclude on this account that Lawrence had in any way compromised the security of India while Mayo's policy put it on a more sound footing, may be wrong. For both believed in having a cushion

1. Alder, G. J., *op. cit.*, p. 38.

around India, but while Mayo wanted it to be extra thick even to the detriment of the Indian princes and people, Lawrence believed that true security of the British empire lay not only in having a cushion around India, but also in internal strength which necessitated a contented people and well-disposed princes who should be wedded to the British for the superior merits of their rule as compared to those of a foreign power which wanted to replace them in this country. That Mayo stretched his imagination too far beyond the Indian frontier, is proved from the fact that it snapped, and not only could he make no gains in the Eastern or Western Turkistan, but by his extra zeal opened the way for an immediate expansion and consolidation of the Russian influence in those territories, while internally by throwing all cautions to the winds, he alienated the ruler of Kashmir, but gained almost nothing in that state either. In the Western Turkistan Mayo wanted to spread British political influence through commerce, and persuaded his friend, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon, to send a mission under Douglas Forsyth to the Russian capital for this purpose. But this mission completely flopped, as it alarmed the Russians, and the protective tariff of Russia in the Western Turkistan that Forsyth had gone to break, became instead a "permanent feature of the Russian Central Asian Empire," as Alder himself agrees.<sup>1</sup> A similar failure awaited Mayo in the Eastern Turkistan and Kashmir as well, as we shall see in the following pages.

The "means as well as the end of Mayo's Eastern Turkistan policy," writes G. J. Alder, "was new. For, while Lawrence curbed commercial enterprise because of its political implications, Mayo encouraged it for that very reason."<sup>2</sup> While Lawrence had forbidden exploration by the British officials in the Eastern Turkistan, and overlooked the reports of the private individuals, like Robert Shaw and William Hayward, Mayo gave full credence to their recommendations, and not only fully sympathised with the desire of the Punjab officials to develop trade with Eastern Turkistan as a means to counteract the possible Russian menace, but also himself owned the whole initiative and policy as a part of his design to have a double-layer cushion as mentioned earlier.

Mayo observed no caution in his approach to Kashmir, and fully convinced of the possibilities and desirability of developing trade with Eastern Turkistan *via* Leh, he declared that it had been wrong on the part of the British to allow the Maharaja to place obstacles in the way. He despatched his special envoy Captain Grey with forthright instructions to negotiate a treaty for the development of trade through Kashmir. All the Maharaja's disinclinations to this effect were brushed aside, and a treaty was finalised which was ratified by Mayo in 1870. Under this treaty, all routes

1. *ibid*, p. 41.

2. *ibid.*, p. 39.

passing through Kashmir were to be surveyed and one would be selected and made a "free highway in perpetuity and at all times for all travellers and traders." Proper arrangements for resthouses, supply depots and carriage were to be made, the route was to be supervised by two Joint-Commissioners of Kashmir and the British. A policy with regard to the transit duties was defined and provision of funds for the route was made.

Dr Henry Caley who was already at Leh had explored and recommended the route through the Chang Chenmu valley as the safest route. William Hayward, Robert Shah and Douglas Forsyth all confirmed it, despite the fact that Forsyth while travelling by this route to Kashgar in 1870 faced difficulties so much so that he had to leave as many as three hundred of his horses and yaks dead on the way. This route was selected as stipulated in the treaty with Kashmir, and opened as highway with all its resthouses, *dak* runners, etc. But despite all efforts no merchant could be persuaded to use it, no trade developed and the whole affair of the Chang Chenmu route proved to be a colossal miscalculation which converted the Kashmir treaty of 1870, with all its paraphernalia of Joint Commissioners, Agents and others into almost a dead letter. Efforts to explore alternative routes proved as abortive as the others, and the whole project was given up as one produced by extra sensitivity to Russia based on hasty calculations and dilettantish designs. Thus, no gains were made in Kashmir and the Maharaja was further antagonised. But probably that did not matter much. The consequences of developing direct diplomatic contacts with Kashgar, as against Lawrence's policy of caution, were different.

Mirza Schadi, an envoy of Yaqub Beg the ruler of the Eastern Turkistan, arrived at the court of Mayo in 1870 with a request that a British representative should accompany him on his journey back home. Mayo awaited such opportunity and selected Forsyth for the purpose with Lawrence's caution not in any way to embroil in the Central Asian politics or encourage the ruler of the Eastern Turkistan to develop hopes of any help against a Russian aggression. Forsyth was said to have faced every veiled opposition from Kashmir, and had no cooperation from Mirza Schadi either. As Mayo associated no soldier with this mission, despite urgent requests from Kashgar, probably Yaqub Beg was also not enthusiastic about meeting it. When Forsyth arrived at Kashgar, Yaqub was busy restoring order in his dominion a long distance away. He could not immediately return, or what was equally probable, he did not actually want to do so, while Forsyth's instructions were not to remain there for long. He therefore returned empty-handed. The whole scheme of the mission proved to be just another exercise in futility. But this exercise did not end just in futility alone. It brought in its train active consequences which it was designed actually to prevent.



Forsyth mission alarmed Russia, and their semi-official *Turkistan Messenger* commented, "since Yaqub Beg is our nearest neighbour ...it seems it would be for Russia and not for England to monopolise the markets on Altay Shar."<sup>1</sup> The Russians translated their feelings into action, and under threats of open hostilities, Yaqub was forced to sign a commercial treaty in 1872 under which Russian merchants and commercial agents got a free access to all the towns of Yaqub's kingdom. The Government of India sitting far away in Calcutta, fretted and fumed, but Mayo's policy of double-layer cushion had failed, and Lawrence's policy of moderation and of seeking security alike through external diplomacy and internal support stood fully vindicated.

### North and North-East

As on the North-West and West, so on the North and North-East the main principle of Mayo's policy remained to have a cordon of friendly and well governed states. Relations with Nepal continued to be on firm but friendly lines. By his Lushai Expedition he gave a peaceful frontier on the North-East of Bengal. And the dominating influence on Burma was retained.

### NEED TO DEMARCATÉ SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Simultaneously while creating a double-layer cordon of friendly and independent states which could act as buffers to the hostile thrusts of Russia and other powerful nations, it became necessary that these powerful nations should be contacted and told plainly that the states on the cordon were within the British sphere of influence and no outside interference would be tolerated. Sir John Lawrence had initiated this proposal, and requested the home authorities to contact Russia to this effect. His suggestion, however, was not immediately appreciated, and his critics held that if Russia had at all to be approached to this effect, that should be done from India, and not from Europe where the British could afford to give her nothing in return for a guarantee of such non-interference. Lord Mayo, however, was convinced of Lawrence's argument and was able successfully to exploit his friendship with the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon to this effect. The Russian occupation of Tashkand and Samarkand added emergency to the matter, the British Press raised a hue and cry and proposed that although Russia could not be made to vacate the territories she had already occupied, steps should be taken before it was too late, to arrest further Russian march towards India, and that could best be done by asking her to recognise Afghanistan and Kashgar as neutral zone between her and the British possessions. Lord Clarendon started correspondence with the Russian Foreign Ministry to this effect.

1. *ibid.*, p. 44.

The proposal to create a neutral zone, however, was different from that of recognising the respective spheres of influence. And Lord Mayo in a despatch dated 3 June 1869, made the matter clear. He told Lord Clarendon in that despatch : "The policy which we believe the Government ought to exercise with regard to frontier nations is to endeavour to show the rulers of these states, and to the world, that in respect to them our policy of annexation had passed away; that it is the desire of the British Government to assist them in becoming strong and independent; that their safety against foreign aggression lies mainly in an alliance with Great Britain; and that by just and good administration it is within their power to command the willing allegiance of their own subjects and the respect of the neighbouring states."<sup>1</sup>

Mayo wrote that what was needed was not a neutral zone, but a definite sphere of influence. For in the former case they would have completely to write off these states, but in the latter case the British awe would remain and nothing would stand in their way to bend before them an unwilling and headstrong tribe. In the former case these states might approach a foreign power against the British, but in the latter one they would know that the British sense of justice was the only guarantee for their existence. On occasions the British may have to cross their borders to chastise or even to conquer. In short a sphere of influence would always be within the British reach directly to annex, although they had no wish ever to do so, while a neutral zone would give them no power on these states, and would give Russia a status of equality with possibilities of intrigues and desires to spread their sway. Under Lord Mayo's scheme of things, Russia was to be given a free hand with regard to Khiva and the kindred states, just as the British would have in Kalat, Afghanistan and the Eastern Turkistan.

As a result of this explanation Lord Clarendon changed his approach to the subject, and sent Douglas Forsyth to St. Petersburg to negotiate in the later part of 1869. The agreement that emerged from these negotiations, placed Bokhara and Khokand within the Russian sphere of influence, while Afghanistan was recognised within that of the British. Both powers were to restrain their respective states from aggressions beyond their frontiers, Upper Oxus was roughly to be the dividing line between the two spheres and Russia was assured that the British had no hostile intentions towards Eastern Turkistan, where as we have already seen, a hasty action of Lord Mayo later led to the violation of this promise and consequent establishment of the Russian commercial hold. Afghanistan, however, was definitely saved for the British and it was decided that her northern frontiers should be delimited so as to avoid any confusion. The British proposal was that the Afghan territories should comprise

1. Gopal, S., *op. cit.*, p. 71.

all those which Dost Muhammad had possessed. Russia agreed and asked Kaufmann, Governor-General of the Russian Turkistan to submit a report on the subject. The British awaited this report for long, but when it did not arrive, towards the close of 1872 they made a unilateral declaration with regard to the northern frontiers of Afghanistan. Russia was thus faced with an accomplished fact. For a time she objected to the inclusion of some territories like Balakh, Badakshan and Wakhan within the Afghan kingdom, but ultimately she acquiesced.

One may say that this unilateral declaration with regard to the Afghan borders on the north was a diplomatic victory of the British, and their influence within those borders became solid and marked as Dr Bisheshwar Prasad believes.<sup>1</sup> Sher Ali also could now busy himself in internal developments without fear of a foreign aggression. But the British did not know that it would have some adverse effects too. For Russia recognised no difference between a simple sphere of influence and direct occupation of the states which fell in it. Soon, therefore, she busied herself in annexations, and what the British wanted to keep as Russian sphere of influence, became directly a part of Russian empire. Nothing on the part of the British could resist this course of action. While within Afghanistan the things developed in a different manner. The British did not annex it, not because they did not want to do so, but because they found themselves incapable of doing so, as their experience in the time of Lord Auckland had shown. Sher Ali had become friend with the British after his meeting with Mayo at Ambala, but he was soon disillusioned with them. And whereas the territories which Russia had annexed after their unilateral declaration went completely beyond the British possibility to interfere with, Russia could still exploit the British failings in Afghanistan and create a situation which later led to the Third Afghan War. It is difficult in these circumstances to say that the unilateral declaration of the British was their diplomatic victory, clear and plain. For one could say with equal emphasis, that by making this declaration they played into the hands of Russia and the ultimate victory in the real sense of the term, belonged to her, not to the British.

### POLICY TOWARDS THE ARAB STATES

There was a similarity between the policies that both Lawrence and Mayo followed towards the Arab states. The policy consisted of non-interference in the internal affairs, recognition of the succeeding *de facto* ruler or rulers, and assertion of paramountcy rights, the moment a foreign power tried to intervene. The difference between Afghanistan and the Arab states was that whereas the former had to be protected from the Russian ambitions, the latter were to be defended

1. Prasad, B., *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49

from the Persian and Turkish assertion of sovereignty, or from the trade rivalry of the European powers like the French and the Dutch. The British objective in establishing political control over the Trucial States, i.e. the coastal principalities in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, which had entered into Maritime Truce with the British undertaking not to violate maritime peace, was motivated by the desire to dominate the lines of communication between their motherland and her eastern empire.

We saw in our chapter on Lawrence as to how Sayyad Salim was removed from the throne of Muscat by Azan. Once the latter had established himself as an undisputed master over Muscat, the British had no objection to recognising him as the *de facto* ruler. The British decision to this effect was quick, lest Azan should seek interposition of the Dutch or that of the French, for a corvette of the former and a gunboat of the latter were then actually present at Muscat. But before Azan could actually be recognised, there was one more upheaval and in the spring of 1871 Azan was done to death and Salim's brother Turki captured the throne. The Government of India had no objection to giving *de facto* recognition to Turki either, once he was secure on the throne. But the difficulty arose when the Sultan of Turkey withheld the payment of subsidy to the new ruler of Muscat. The Government of India had an obligation to enforce this payment, for *de facto* recognition to any ruler in Muscat implied *ipso facto* the British obligation to enforce their own award to this effect. Besides a *de facto* recognition had no significance if the means of subsistence were withheld from it. But the Home Government on considerations other than those related to the Persian Gulf politics, decided not to interfere, and before this the spirited objections of Lord Mayo proved of no avail. This was a departure from the policy of 'masterly Inactivity' for which, however, the Government of Lord Mayo was not responsible.

The main objective of the Government of Lord Mayo in these regions was, however, the maintenance of the maritime peace, which was necessitated by their desire to keep the lines of communication safe. And when this safety was jeopardised even by a chief himself who was under the British guarantees of friendship and security, the British did not hesitate to interfere, and although they did not intend to annex any principality of an erring prince, the prince himself could be deposed and replaced by one who promised to serve the British interests the best. This happened in the case of the chief of the island of Bahrein. The ruler of this island enjoyed friendly relations with the British, and had undertaken by written agreements to accept British arbitration in his external disputes. He was also governed by the terms of the Maritime Truce which, however, he violated when in cooperation with the chief of Abudabai he attacked Gwadar. Lord Mayo was incensed, and the Bahrein chief, Mohammad bin Khalifah was deposed in favour of his brother Ali. The

deposed ruler, however, took the help of one Nasir bin Mobarak and in a bid to recapture power, killed Ali, but was himself done to death by Nasir, thus bringing about a flagrant violation of peace. Mayo's Government interfered for the second time and brought a son of Ali to power under same conditions as obtained in the time of Mohammed bin Khalifah.

Shortly after, Turkey and Persia both claimed sovereign rights over Bahrein. The Home Government showed some softness towards Persia in order to wean her from Russia, but Lord Mayo disagreed to any such deviation from policy and rejected the claims of both the contestants. Similarly, no claims of sovereignty by Turkey over Yemen and Lahaj were entertained, for although the British themselves had no territorial ambitions in these regions, independence of these petty principalities had to be safeguarded lest a big power should get into a position in the Arab littoral where it may threaten British commerce and communication with the East.

Such thus were the works of Lord Mayo in India. He, it is said, lived for efficiency and service, and died for them. In January 1872, the Viceroy visited the convict settlement in the Andaman Islands to see that proper living conditions were provided for these unlucky inhabitants. In February, when he was walking back to the landing-stage of Port Blair where his steam yacht was moored, suddenly there was a thud, and before the horrified escort could come to the Viceroy's rescue, they found him fatally stabbed. This was the work of a Pathan fanatic who had been secretly following the Viceroy in the twilight. The Pathan had been working in the Punjab Mounted Police when he was condemned at Peshawar for slaying his blood-feud enemy, which he considered no crime. Ever since his conviction, as he later told, he had made up his mind to pay back the British by killing "some European of high rank." And this is what he did.

Thus died an illustrious and kind-hearted man, who successfully fulfilled the promises he had made, and proved how wrong the views of his critics at his appointment were. He was one of the greatest wellwishers of the Indian people, who was loved and respected alike by common man and prince.

His body was conveyed on a ship to England, and even *Punch*, one of the bitterest critics of his appointment, did not fail in acknowledging its mistake. The national journal of England published the following :

*'We took his gauge, as did the common fool,  
By Report's shallow valuing appraised,  
'When from the Irish Secretary's tool  
To the great Indian throne we saw him raised.'*

*'They gauged him better, those who know him best;  
They read, beneath that bright and blithesome  
cheer,  
'The statesman's wide and watchful eye, the breast  
Unwarped by favour and unwrung by fear.'  
'If true regret and true respect have balm  
For hearts that more than public loss must mourn,  
'They join to crown this forehead, cold and calm,  
With laurel well won as was ever worn;  
'Only the greener that' twas late to grow,  
And that by sudden blight its leaves are shed;  
'Then with thy honoured freight, sail sad and slow,  
O ship, that bears him to his kindred dead.'*<sup>1</sup>

1. From Hunter, W.W. *op. cit.*

## Earl of Northbrook, 1872-1876

Born on 22 January 1826, the year his father, Sir Francis Baring entered the Parliament, "Thomas George Baring afterwards Earl of Northbrook was nurtured in the air of Whig politics and high office,"<sup>1</sup> writes Mallet. Right from his childhood Thomas George Baring is said to have shown a keen intellectual disposition, his "general intelligence and knowledge," as his tutor Bird wrote, being "considerably above the common run of his age." He was not as yet 22 when after completing his education, he started his career as the private secretary to his uncle, Henry Labouchere, who was then the Chief Secretary for Ireland. In the General Elections of 1852 George Baring stood for membership to the Parliament from the constituency of Penryn and Falmouth. But he failed. In the General Election of 1857 he tried his luck once again, and this time was elected to the House of Commons. Shortly after this he was appointed by the Government of Palmerston as the Civil Lord of Admiralty. Many were the vicissitudes of life which he had to face after this, till in 1872 he was appointed as Viceroy and the Governor-General of India.

### INTERNAL POLICY

Before the arrival of Lord Northbrook in India, the administration of this country had been touched with reform at its many weak points by the vigorous rule of Lord Mayo. The financial decentralisation and other such reforms, sound as they were in principle, "had undoubtedly given a great stimulus to the imposition of local taxes and rates, while the effort required to balance the budget and finance the development of the country by canals and other public works had proved expensive, and had necessitated, among other measures, an increase in the rate of the income-tax."<sup>2</sup> Nor had the pace been less severe in the field of legislation.

In an address presented to Lord Northbrook, the People's Association of Dacca declared that "the imposition of numerous taxes,

1. Bernard Mallet, *Thomas George, Earl of Northbrook* (1908), p. 16.

2. *ibid*, p. 65.

quite unsuited to the...circumstances of the people...and the enactment of several uncalled-for Acts interfering with the civil, social and religious customs and usages of the country, have...created a feeling of deep alarm, anxiety, and distrust, in the minds of the people.”<sup>1</sup> J.P. Norman, the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court had been murdered on the steps of the Court by a Muslim fanatic. A few months thereafter Lord Mayo also met the same fate in the Andaman Islands. Both these murders were associated with the Wahabis, though this could not ultimately be proved. Yet the Wahabi Movement centred mainly in the Sittana state on the frontiers, and the Kuka Movement in the Punjab had charged the atmosphere and many Englishmen were worried about their safety. In the very first week of his arrival, Northbrook initiated an enquiry into the matter and remarked that there was unease and dissatisfaction in the country, and “Probably it has arisen from increase of taxation and certain improvements in the laws, etc., which have perhaps been pushed forward a little too fast. It is most unfortunate that the income-tax was raised in 1870 and the local taxation was increased in 1871, and what is more, we do not believe that either was necessary.”<sup>2</sup>

There was a feeling, as Samuel Wanchope, the officiating Commissioner of Police in Calcutta wrote : “That the object of every Governor is to upset that which was done by his predecessor and introduce something new...The Natives look on themselves as being hustled..... into a state of premature civilisation and wish....to settle down.

“Natives hate change, and they say that during the last fifteen years the whole country has been turned upside down by new laws, new taxes, and new institutions.” Northbrook wrote to a friend : “The more I see of the country here, the more satisfied I am that we have been driving the coach too fast, and must put on the drag.”<sup>3</sup> He therefore felt that a period of rest was required.

Immediately after his arrival in India, he made enquiries and reached the above conclusions, he declared to the people of the country : “that England desires no territorial aggrandisement; that equal justice shall be dealt to all; that religious liberty shall be maintained; and that the feelings of all classes and creeds shall be duly considered; to these principles, so it is my duty, so is it my desire, to adhere.”<sup>4</sup>

1. Address to Northbrook, 15 May 1872, quoted by Mullick, G.B., *Lord Northbrook and his Mission in India*.
2. Mallet, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
3. Quoted by Moulton, Edward C., *Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration 1872-1876*, pp. 13, 14.
4. Mallet, *op. cit.*, p. 23.



### Economic Policy

Lord Northbrook, in conformity with the views of a Liberal as he himself was, believed in the economic principles of *laissez-faire*. He did not favour direct taxes, and liked to follow the policy of free trade. He agreed with Lord Canning whom he often quoted to the following effect : "Danger for danger; I would rather risk governing India with an army of only 40,000 Europeans than I would risk having to impose unpopular taxation."<sup>1</sup> He was convinced that one of the important causes of discontent of the Indians was direct taxation, and he determined on reducing it. The budget estimates for 1872-73 showed a surplus of £ 237,000, but as the year progressed it was discovered that the surplus would rather be much more than this. Northbrook decided that the time had arrived to reduce or remove some of the objectionable direct taxes.

One such tax was the income-tax which Lord Mayo had imposed at the rate of 1 per cent on all incomes of and above Rs 500 in 1869, but which was raised later in 1870 to 3 per cent. There had been much opposition to it, and Mayo reduced it to 1 per cent on and above the income of Rs 750. After the death of Lord Mayo the whole question had been re-examined by the acting Viceroy Lord Napier, and though it was not abolished for 1872-73, the exemption limit was raised from Rs 750 to Rs 1,000. The public and press opinion was critical of its not having been abolished.

Besides, a great growth had taken place in the local taxation after the decentralisation Act passed by Mayo in 1870. The Secretary of State permitted the provincial governments to levy cesses on land for roads, education and other public utility works, which for the first time after complete financial centralisation of 1833, let loose the famished provincial finance to grab whatever came its way. Bombay imposed a tax on the non-agricultural rural classes, Central Provinces levied tolls on roads, and Bengal and Madras also took quick measures similarly to replenish their resources. There was a spurt in the municipal taxes as well, with the result that all around a feeling of discontent was aroused. In many cases, the aim of these taxes had been only to undertake developmental activities for the benefit of the people themselves, but the people were not educated and made ready to receive them, with the result that the intentions of the Government were misconstrued and criticised both through press and platform.

Northbrook requested reports and views from the best local officers, the Indian and English Christian missionaries and some well-known leaders regarding public opinion. Everyone suggested that something by way of reducing the burden of taxation on the people was called for. Northbrook first proposed that the provincial taxes

1. Quoted, Moulton, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

should be abolished or curtailed, but the income-tax should continue for a limited period to help in their place. But this proposal had two defects, first that the policy of self-reliance and provincial responsibility recently initiated would get a blow; and secondly, the centre would be denied the important source of income even for the future. The income-tax, therefore, was remitted by the Governor-General-in-Council by four votes to three, and for the future, a resolution passed by the Government declared: "His Excellency in Council believes that no additional taxation is required for the purpose of maintaining the finances of India in a sound and satisfactory condition."<sup>1</sup> The loss of revenue on account of income-tax was £600,000.

After abolishing the income-tax, Northbrook now gave his attention to the subject of giving relief in the local taxes. The land cesses, he thought, could not be abolished because they had been sanctioned by the Secretary of State, and because their abolition would make it incumbent on the Central Government to help the provinces from its own revenues which were already meagre. He, therefore, while on the one hand asking the local governments to take help of the people in the local improvement works for which the Local Rates were levied, and instructing them not to increase the local taxes any further; also encouraged them on the other hand to bring about some modifications in the more unpopular local taxes. The provincial governments responded to this call, and, writes Mallet: "The repeal of the income-tax, the abandonment of the non-agricultural cess in Bombay and of the house tax in Madras, the disallowance of the Bengal Municipalities Bill and the modification of the Pandari tax (a sort of local income-tax) in the Central Provinces, had, in the words of a leading native journal, 'a most soothing effect on the popular mind'."<sup>2</sup>

Besides, to control the growth of the municipal taxes also, a legislation was adopted by the Centre; and Northbrook welcomed all these changes and remissions, considering "that the slowing down of local improvements was a small price to pay for bringing provincial taxation more into line with public sentiment."<sup>3</sup>

The Secretary of State for India, Argyll, however, did not fully agree with the taxation policy of Northbrook, and wrote: "I am still of opinion that remission (of income-tax) would have been better spent on a reduction of the Salt Tax, as nobody is relieved by the abandonment of the Income Tax except a comparatively small and a comparatively wealthy class."<sup>4</sup>

1. *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

2. Mallet, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 52.

3. Moulton, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

4. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 41.

Besides abolishing income-tax, Northbrook attempted several other fiscal reforms all of which, however, he was not able to carry out due to the non-approval of the home authorities or due to certain other reasons. One such reform thus attempted by him related to salt duty which varied from province to province, was very light in southern India and did not exist in Rajputana at all. The result was that to prevent smuggling of salt from light or untaxed areas to the highly taxed parts of the country where salt naturally was costly, a customs line 2,500 miles long, patrolled by 13,000 men, had to be maintained which was quite costly. Northbrook by equalising rates of duty and some other adjustments, was able to knock off about 1000 miles of the line and thus effect an economy in the expenditure.

An important development of the time of Northbrook was the controversy between him and the Secretary of State, Salisbury, on the Indian tariff. An Act of 1871 had laid down a general rate of duty on the fifty-four classified imported articles at  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent with a few upward and downward variations in some cases. The export duty on most of the important articles was fixed at 3 per cent. A petition of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce requested Northbrook to remove the export duties, as they lowered the competitive strength of the Indian goods in the foreign markets. On the other hand, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce objected to the respective import duties of 5 and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the Lancashire cotton goods and yarn. Already 10 per cent import duties imposed both on cloth and yarn to meet the financial troubles after the Mutiny, had been, in response to the protests of the Lancashire industrialists, reduced to the above level in 1862. But now they objected against these lower rates as well, and criticised, in the name of free trade, the Government of India's policy of giving protection to the growing cotton industry in India by such means.

Lancashire was a greater stronghold of the Conservative Party in England. When this party came in power, they moved Salisbury and had a former Director of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce appointed on the India Council. Now they made repeated representations against the import duties which Salisbury forwarded to India. Northbrook appointed a tariff committee to examine the whole question, and in the light of their recommendations introduced some changes.

Among the changes introduced was the abolition of almost all the export duties, resulting in an annual loss of Rs 1,730,000 on the basis of the 1874-75 trade returns. The general rate of import duties was reduced from  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 per cent at an annual cost of Rs 1,720,000. The import duty on coffee which afforded some protection to the coffee industry in India was completely abolished, while that on tobacco which afforded similar protection to the indigenous industry was reduced from 10 to 5 per cent. To offset a part of the revenue losses, however, some import duties such as on wines, arms, ammunition,

etc., were either enhanced or imposed anew. But the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  and 5 per cent import duties respectively on cotton yarn and cloth were retained, and Northbrook wrote to Salisbury in 1875 to this effect: This import duty, "apart from its incidental effect in the way of protection, which of course is an evil, seems to me to be one of the most unobjectionable of all the taxes we have in India."<sup>1</sup>

The low rates of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  and 5 per cent import duties, it was argued, could not afford much protection to the cotton industry of India, which if it was growing, had some other natural advantages as compared to its Lancashire counterpart. Its main advantage lay in the revenues which at the time the Government could not afford to lose. Besides these, duties were levied on fine fabrics and therefore it was the richer class of people in India which paid the price. Already the public opinion was sufficiently exercised at their lower rates. If in these circumstances they were abolished, and direct taxation was resorted to, it would bring about much discontent among the educated classes and the Indian press. Northbrook, however, was prepared to offer some alternative steps which would discourage the growth of the fine cloth industry in India to the detriment of Lancashire in the future, for immediately no such industry existed in strength so as to arouse the British anxiety.

These steps of Northbrook, however, failed to satisfy the Lancashire industrialists, and aroused the indignation of Salisbury who threatened the Government of India's Act to this effect to be disallowed and took an unprecedented step of sending his permanent Under-Secretary Sir Louis Mallet personally to India to persuade the Viceroy to abolish the objectionable duties. Much bitterness ensued. Northbrook was not prepared to re-consider the whole matter, though he should have made slight adjustments to meet some demands. Salisbury, however, adopted a tough line, for which he was even criticised in the British Parliament and press. *The Times* thus condemned that Salisbury's efforts to convert the Viceroy and his Council into mere puppets, "pulled by wires from Downing-street," would ultimately make it difficult for self-respecting men to fill such offices "until we were made aware of the declension from bad to worse by the rude awakening of some catastrophe."<sup>2</sup> Salisbury, however, did not change much, and Northbrook's successor, Lord Lytton, was made to introduce the desired change.

There was a tendency with the settlement officers to increase rates of assessment every time a new land revenue settlement was made in the areas where permanent land settlement had not been introduced. Northbrook issued instructions that if moderate rates were charged, with the greater agricultural profits the cultivators would consume

1. *ibid.*, p. 185.

2. *ibid.*, 208-209.

more of duty-paying articles, thus benefiting the Government in another way, while higher rates would impoverish them, make them indolent and discontented. The result was that the provincial governments changed their habits. The Oudh Government thus remitted or refunded revenues amounting to about 12 lakh rupees. In Bombay, instead of the usual increase of 96 per cent in the rate of assessment, an increase only of 33 per cent was made. But despite all this leniency, the land revenue increased from £ 21.35 in 1872 to £ 21.50 millions in 1875.

Of the total annual expenditure of India, over twenty-five per cent was consumed by 'home charges' which consisted mainly of the military establishments, pensions and expenses on the India office establishment in London. India was made to pay the cost even of the wars fought purely for the defence of the British imperial interests not even remotely related to this country. Thus, India paid the cost of the Abyssinian war fought in 1867, and all the protests of Sir John Lawrence pleading the insufficiency of the Indian revenues which had been considerably despoiled as a result of the great mutiny, had been of no avail. Expenses of the expedition sent to Perak were similarly charged in 1875 to India, and Northbrook's objections were all brushed aside. Despite all protests of Northbrook the 'home charges' in his time rather further rose, and he remained completely helpless.

Northbrook called upon provinces to introduce economy in the cost of the civil administration. He told them that postponement in the development of education, communication, etc. was productive of less harm than the evil of increased taxes. Although the provinces failed in response to the Viceroy's call to indicate areas where retrenchments could be introduced, Northbrook was able successfully to resist any increase in the imperial assignments to the provinces.

Northbrook, like Mayo, also tried to reduce military expenditure by proposing some reorganisation plans in the army. Although he could not accomplish much here either, he resisted the increasing demands of his Commander-in-Chief, and saved at least as much as £ 400,000 per annum of his predecessor's term. Besides, in 1872 he rejected some irrigation schemes put up by Bombay, Punjab, Sind and Oudh. A very costly irrigation plan for Bengal was similarly given a death blow by the Government Resolution of 8 October 1874, and in its place a cheaper scheme based on local knowledge and requirements was adopted.

In the opinion of Northbrook, India's salvation lay not in an increased taxation, but in the free trade in which there was to be less of imports and more of exports. And, therefore, as Lord Cromer wrote : "One of the first acts performed by Lord Northbrook when he arrived in Bombay was to abolish the export duty then levied on

Indian wheat. He also pushed on vigorously the completion of the Indus Valley Railway, and successfully resisted the pressure brought to bear on him by the Duke of Argyll and the India Office to construct a section of that line between Mooltan and Hyderabad (Scinde) on the narrow gauge. These two measures taken together gave the first impulse to the Indian wheat trade, which has now assumed enormous proportions. The railway, though originally intended for strategical purposes, has proved of the greatest value for commercial purposes."<sup>1</sup>

One difficulty that Northbrook had to face towards the close of 1875, was sudden and sharp decline in the value of silver in the world money markets. Since India followed silver standard, while the English currency was based on gold, India's annual payments on account of 'home charges' sharply rose. In 1875 alone India suffered a loss of £ 1.41 by exchange. Another difficulty faced by the Viceroy was the famine of 1873-74, the expenditure on which amounted to £ 6,306,673, whole of which was charged against the revenue. Despite all this, during the four years term of Northbrook's Viceroyalty, the State showed a net surplus of about £ 2 million which may indeed be considered remarkable.

The *Hindu Patriot* summed up the position thus : "We cannot fully realise the importance of the financial measures....of Lord Northbrook unless we cast ourselves back to the time when Lord Mayo's Government by a course of financial extravagance and a system of over-taxation filled the country with discontent from one end to the other. The late Viceroy sought to crowd the progress of fifty years in five, and the result was a pressure upon the people for additional revenue.... The leading object of the financial policy of Lord Northbrook has been to reduce the burden of taxation on the people....while Lord Northbrook has given substantial relief to the people from taxation, he has not in the slightest degree checked the course of progress which the country was making under previous administration."<sup>2</sup>

Northbrook made his achievements, but it is not necessary to compare them with those of Mayo, nor does *Hindu Patriot's* judgement seem to be based on sound analysis. In fact Mayo gave a sound footing to the Indian finances which habitually showed deficits every year, and lacking discipline of dependable statistics and regular habits, made every type of developmental planning utterly difficult. He sowed the seeds, after much hard labour on the land, and Northbrook reaped the fruits.

1. Chhabra, G.S., *Social and Economic History of Punjab*, pp. 271-75.

2. Quoted, Moulton, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

### Education

In the field of education, Northbrook supported the principles of Wood's despatch of 1854. He in fact, as private secretary to Sir Charles Wood, had a hand in the drafting of this despatch, but regretted that not much progress had been made in India in the development of education. The emphasis in the 'sixties had been on the development of higher learning in India, which is obvious, for example, from the fact that whereas the Bengal Government spent £150,000 every year on it, the elementary education was starved and given only £50,000 a year. Lord Mayo wanted to reverse this policy, and under him the number of degree colleges was reduced so that the funds thus released may be spent on elementary learning and on the improvement of the remaining institutions of higher learning. He declared in his policy resolution the intention of his Government to reduce expenditure on English education, and to promote instead the vernacular studies. The axe fell in Bengal on the Berhampur, Krishanagar and Patna colleges with the result that the educated men like Ramnath Tagore cried out that the aim of the Mayo Government was to thwart the growth of the English educated class. Protest meetings were held, and representations were made to the Secretary of State, that though it was commendable that the Government wanted to develop vernacular education, that should not be done at the cost of high learning.

When Northbrook arrived in India, this agitation of the educated Indians was still going on, and they were afraid that the Government no more wanted to follow the principles of the 1854 despatch. The new Viceroy adopted a resolution in January 1873 reassuring the people that there was no intention of the Government to sacrifice the principles of Wood's despatch, and that the elementary education would not be developed at the cost of higher learning. The three colleges above named, were also slowly restored to their original status. And Northbrook declared that he had the highest respect for India's attainments in the past, particularly in the fields of art and engineering. The magnificent remains of architecture in different parts of the country like Orissa were a high tribute to India's fertile imagination and high intellectual attainment. He therefore did not want that India should slavishly imitate the West. "I should like to see," he said "a wholesome rivalry established between England and India...I do not wish to see English art or French art copied...in India"<sup>1</sup> He issued instructions to the provincial governments to revise the vernacular text-books of the schools, so that they should be full of Indian descriptions and allusions, not those of the West which the children would not be able to comprehend and would start learning by rote.

Northbrook, like Mayo, also gave his attention to the backward

1. Quoted, Moulton, p. 68

state of education among the Muslims. He gave every official support to Sir Sayyad Ahmad's scheme of a Muslim Anglo-Vernacular College at Aligarh, and offered a perpetual scholarship of Rs 10,000 for this institution from his own pocket. A resolution was passed under which the Muslim classic literature was to be given a due place in a scheme of higher education. The net result of all this was that the confidence of the educated classes was restored and the agitation slowly died out.

### Civil Services

Section 87 of the Charter Act of 1833 had declared that no discrimination on basis of caste, colour, creed or nationality would be made for purposes of recruitment of the Indians to the civil services. The Act of 1853 introduced competitive examinations in England, in which Indians could appear. But it was extremely costly for an Indian to go all the way to England, and then take his examination in an alien atmosphere. The declared purpose of the British Government despite the Acts of 1833 and 1853 seemed to be to let as small a number of Indians to enter the services as possible. And this, because, the loyalty of the Indians was suspected. The Government of India instituted nine scholarships of £ 200 each in 1868, tenable for three years, for brilliant Indian students to go to England for studies and competition. The Secretary of State, Argyll, suspended these scholarships and declared that a mere success in examinations was not a clear proof of one's ability as an administrator. He said that Indian character was different from that of the English.

A Bengali may prove superior to a Pathan or Sikh in a competitive examination, but it would be dangerous to place him "in command over any of the martial tribes of Upper India." He therefore proposed that Indians should be appointed to the Civil Services rather by nomination and asked the Government of India to draw up Regulations to this effect. This, of course, was to be in addition to those of the Indians who despite all obstacles could succeed in the competition in England. The principle of nomination was obviously to help choose only such Indians as could be relied upon for their loyalty. And then, the most important posts were still to be kept outside their reach.

Lord Northbrook's Government drew up the rules for nominations in 1874, but the Home Government pruned them and hardened them so that the number of Indians getting nomination should remain at the bare minimum. And when they were sent to the provincial governments for purposes of application almost all of them shirked making proposals, with the result that by the time Lord Northbrook retired from India, not a single Indian could get nominated under the new rules.



The minimum and maximum age limits respectively for admission to the competitive examinations in England was 17 and 21. The maximum limit was not high enough for an Indian student to complete his university education and go to England to compete. Northbrook proposed that the respective age limits should be raised to 19 and 23. But he was opposed by his Council and the Home authorities with the result that the maximum age limit was rather reduced to 19. This came as a shock to the educated people in India. S.N. Banerjea took up the challenge, undertook a whirlwind tour of India and made this a national issue. An agitation started almost immediately against this retrograde step of the Conservative Government in England.

### **The Famine of Bengal**

In 1874 occurred a severe famine in Bengal. Sir George Campbell writes : "For the first time in Indian history a great failure of crops such as hitherto had produced famine was met in such a way as to save the lives of the public." When the famine broke out, Lord Northbrook wrote : "Everything that can be done, will be done to save the people. This is a case where just as in war, everything must go to the winds."

There was a lot of criticism in England as well as in India of the way the Government of India tried to handle the situation. It was suggested that the prices should be regulated, the operation of the private traders should be stopped and that there should be no export of rice when the Indians themselves starved for the lack of it. But, Northbrook felt that the greater need of the people was for employment and other facilities to make money to spend. It was not food which was lacking but the money to buy it. Despite all criticism, therefore, Lord Northbrook stuck to his policy, and the rice for which he had already entered into a commitment was exported. The arguments of Northbrook were that if the export of rice had been stopped, it should have added to its supply in India thereby reducing the prices below their natural level and increasing the consumption ; whereas, he asserted, "one of the greatest safeguards against a famine in India, as in any country, lies in the diminution of consumption which naturally results from the rise of prices which the anticipation of scarcity occasions." Secondly, he argued that if a commitment once made was not honoured, it would spoil India's credit. Another argument forwarded by his supporters was that the famine was not a food famine, food was always obtainable. It was rather a famine of money. Hence under these circumstances the main requirement was work for adults by which they could earn money to buy the food with. And this is what was done.

Elaborate arrangements were made to provide work for the able-bodied men and charity for those who could not work. Loans were

forwarded to the cultivators and land revenue was remitted. Despite a crushing criticism Northbrook went ahead with his policy, till ultimately the critics turned to the other side, and now began to say that the precautions had been overdone.

Cromer wrote : "The measures adopted under Lord Northbrook's auspices were fully successful. Very few deaths occurred from starvation. The only result of the public outcry in favour of heterodox proceedings was that, possibly, relief in various forms was given somewhat too lavishly and that therefore the cost of the operations was unduly increased."

### NORTHBROOK AND THE GAEKWAD OF BARODA

In the time of Northbrook, as in the time of his predecessors<sup>\*</sup> after the Mutiny, the policy of interference in the affairs of the States in the case of gross misrule was carried on, though the policy of annexation was done away with. In Northbrook's time trouble arose in Baroda. The Gaekwad of Baroda was alleged to have attempted to poison the British Resident in his State, Colonel Phayre, which brought the question of misgovernment in the State to the British notice. To give a fair treatment to the case, Northbrook appointed a Commission of enquiry under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice of Bengal, with six other members—three English and three Indians. To the utter embarrassment of the Viceroy, the English members declared against Malhar Rao, the Gaekwad, while the Indians found him not guilty. The Viceroy himself, however, was convinced of the Gaekwad's crime, and should have taken a bold step in the teeth of Indian opposition when the Cabinet at Home saved the situation by proclaiming the deposition of Gaekwad neither on the basis of the result of the Commission's enquiry, nor assuming the allegations to be correct, but on grounds of his "notorious misconduct, gross misgovernment, and incapacity to introduce reform." A young boy from a branch of the family of Gaekwad was appointed to succeed and the new ruler being young, the administration of the State was assumed by the British who got an opportunity to set things as they desired.

Mallet comments on it : "The right thing was done but the manner of doing it was questionable, for it not only set an inconvenient precedent but went far to create the very difficult situation as to popular feeling which it was designed to obviate."<sup>1</sup>

### THE ARYA SAMAJ

No account of the time of Lord Northbrook in India will be complete unless we refer also to the Arya Samaj Movement which

1. Mallet, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-66.

was founded in his time. Since this Movement played an important role in the transformation of the social life of the Hindus in the time of Northbrook's successors, and continues to influence the minds of millions of people even in the modern times, the reader will excuse somewhat greater details of its history which do not strictly belong to the period of the Viceroy under study.

### Swami Dayanand

A short distance from the north-western coast of the Indian peninsula, Dayanand the founder of the movement was born in 1824, in the prosperous town of Morvi, in Kathiawar. His father, a Brahmin of the highest order, held a respectable post in the Government of the State and was "a rigid, austere Brahmin, thoroughly orthodox and uncompromising in his religious beliefs and practices.. his mother on the other hand, was the personification of sweetness, gentleness and goodness."<sup>1</sup>

The education of Dayanand whose original name was Mul Shankar, commenced when he was five years of age, and he was invested with the sacred thread in his eighth year. His father himself assumed the role of a teacher, but the son seemed to have been a born rebel against parental authority, and it was the father's piously-intended insistence upon his son's observing the fast of *Shivratri*, which turned the son "into the most virulent and successful opponent of image-worship of his time," at the age of fourteen. Death of his beloved sister had turned the young boy's attention to investigations into the mysteries of birth and death. Death of his beloved uncle who had rocked him on his lap often distracted him at the age of nineteen, and he was told on his anxious enquiries that *yogabhyas* was the method by which he could understand the mystery. But the *yoga*, as he understood, could not be mastered till he left his home.

His father already having reason to suspect such workings in his son's mind, decided to weave a web of affection round him, but Dayanand resisted his parent's plan with determination and declined to be married. The marriage was postponed for a year at the intercession of friends. The boy's proposal, that he should be sent to Kashi for further education, having been rejected, he was sent to a learned theologian in a neighbouring village for the purpose. But this could not satisfy the boy, who was recalled, and the day for his wedding was fixed. A week or so before the fixed date, however, the boy fled from home and became a *Sadhu*. He was soon traced out and imprisoned under a strong guard. The same night the boy succeeded once again in escaping, and this time for good, never seeing his father again.

1. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, p. 4.

After leaving home for the second time, assuming the ochre-coloured garments and changing his name, for full fifteen years, "from 1845 to 1860, young Dayanand wandered North, South East and West almost all over India, in pursuit of knowledge and truth... In search of teachers of fame and *yogis* of merit he penetrated into the innermost recesses of the Himalayas... He crossed and recrossed the valleys of the noblest of Indian rivers, the Ganges, the Jamuna, and the Narbada, and mounted the highest accessible tops of the hills near or in the vicinity of the sources of those rivers."<sup>1</sup> It was here that he delved deep into the mysteries of nature. After studying for over thirty years, he received finishing touches to his education when he waited for two years and a half on Virjananda, a master spirit.

After this he entered into public life, visiting some of the most important towns of what is now known as U. P., preaching and teaching his philosophy. It was on 10 April 1875, that he founded the movement, establishing the first Arya Samaj at Bombay. At Lahore, the Samaj was established in 1877, and it was this place which became its centre and where its principles received their final shape. From 1877 to 1883 Swami Dayanand spent his time in "preaching and teaching and writing books as well as establishing and organising Arya Samajs throughout India." He met with the greatest success in Punjab, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Rajputana and Gujarat. Like in the Brahmo Samaj, Dayanand's speeches were delivered in Hindi. The Swami finished the compilation of his *Satyartha Prakash* in 1874. For some time, there was a talk between him and Madam Blavatsky the founder of the Theosophical Society for union between the two societies. But it failed. The Swami died on 30 October 1883, at Ajmer, as a result of the slow effect of a subtle poison administered to him mixed in food, by a Muslim concubine of Maharana Sajjan Singh of Jodhpur. The Swami had gone there on the invitation of the Maharana, and had taken a strong exception to his living with the concubine.

*His Beliefs* A note may here be added regarding some general beliefs of the Swami on the basis of which the principles of the Samaj were drawn up. The Swami believed that some persons might have more of the divine in them in proportion to what others have. But this should in no way mean that they are the same as God. In fact, he held, no man is infallible, however exalted he may be. The only approved forms of worship, according to him, are *Stuti*—contemplation, *Prarthana*—communion and *Upasana*—prayer. And the only approved form of expiation is repentance with a determination not to sin again. The Swami believed in *Karma*, and therefore in transmigration. He believed in 'fate' only as much as it conformed with the doctrine of *Karma* and not beyond that.

1. *ibid.*, p. 18.

The man has the power, if he has the will, to make or unmake his destiny. Although a due respect should be paid to the living parents, there is no need of ancestor-worship. *Vedas* are infallible and inexhaustible source of all knowledge. The Swami did not believe in polytheism, nor did he have a belief in pantheism. Yet he believed that although God was distinct from the world, he was immanent in it as the principle of its life and existence. God never incarnates, though Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, etc., who are only *Devtas*, do. He had no belief in the mythology of the *Puranas* and condemned caste system, which, according to him, had been a source of many evils in the Hindu society. Nobody is a born *Brahman* or born *Sudra*. *Sudra* is he who does evil, and *Brahman* is he who does good.

God and soul, according to him, are two distinct entities, each having certain attributes of his own, Yet they are inseparable and are related to each other as Pervader and the Pervaded. Three things are eternal : God, Soul and Prakriti. The purpose of creation is the essential and natural exercise of the creative energy of the Deity. "A person once asked someone : 'what is the purpose of the eyes?' 'Why, to see with, to be sure,' was the reply. The same is the case here. God's creative energy must have play, and the Souls must reap the fruits of their Karma."

The transmigration or earthly bondage of Soul has a cause. Cause is ignorance, which is a source of all sin. The freedom of Soul from ignorance, thus, is its salvation. But salvation lasts only for a period, on the expiration of which the Soul assumes the body again.

*Devtas* are those who are wise. Virtuous activity superior to to passive resignation. The other creatures should be treated in the same manner as one himself would like to be treated. *Swarga* is nothing but a state of happiness in which soul lives as a result of good actions. *Narka* is the state of pain.

"All truth must satisfy five tests : (1) It must not militate against the nature and attributes of God ; (2) It must not be opposed to the teaching of the *Vedas* ; (3) It must stand the test of the well-known eight kinds of proof based on natural laws ; (4) It must have the sanction of '*apt purshas*' (i.e., men learned, true and holy) ; and lastly ; (5) It must be in consonance with the dictates of one's own conscience. Every doctrine must be subjected to these five tests, and accepted if it fulfils them."

The true teacher is he who can teach the science of the *Vedas* and their commentaries. And true pupil is he who is devoted to the teacher, and is eager to learn ; whose character is unassailable and

whose capacity is strong enough to assimilate knowledge and grasp truth. The term Guru applies to all those through whom mind is weaned from falsehood and it includes father, mother and preceptor.<sup>1</sup>

The watchword of the Aryas was 'Back to the Vedas which are perfect and source of all sciences and knowledge.' There could be no historical or temporal references to them.

*Qualifications of a member.* A person, as it was laid down by the Swami, must subscribe to the following ten *Niyamas*—or principles, before he can become a member of the Samaj.

1. God is primary cause of all true knowledge.
2. God is all-truth, all-knowledge...unbegotten, infinite ...and the cause of the universe. To Him alone worship is due.
3. *Vedas* are the books of true knowledge. Every Arya must read them.
4. Arya should always be ready to accept truth and renounce untruth.
5. All actions must conform to virtue and be performed after a thorough study of right and wrong.
6. Primary work of the Samaj is to benefit the whole world by improving the physical, spiritual and social conditions of the people.
7. All should be treated with love and due regard to their merit.
8. Ignorance must be dispelled and knowledge diffused.
9. Every one is to consider his own good to be included in that of the others.
10. In personal affairs, all are to have freedom, but no person is to stand in the way of the general good.

Every member should observe the following five *Mahayanjnas*.

1. *Brahma Yajna*, which is twofold :

*a*—*Sandhya* or worship of God every morning and every evening.

1. These beliefs of the Swami are given at the end of his book *Satyartha Prakash*, and are quoted by Lajpat Rai, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

*b—Swadhyaya* or regular reading of portions of scripture every day.

2. The day is to be begun with *Deva Yajna*,—the well-known *Homa* or burning of ghee.
3. *Pitri Yajna*—or some sort of daily service to parents.
4. *Atithi Yajna*—or the feeding of some ascetic or a learned man.
5. *Balivaishwa Deva Yajna*—or a duty towards poor and helpless persons and towards domestic animals.

*Main Programmes and Activities.* The basic principles<sup>1</sup> on which the social ideas of the Samaj were based were : (1) Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. (2) Equality of sexes. (3) Absolute justice and fair play between man and man, and nation and nation. Equal opportunities to all according to their nature, Karma and merit. And (4) Love and charity towards all.

The social activities of Aryas among the Hindus, in practice, as commented upon by Valentine Chirol in 1910, were praiseworthy : “The influence has been constantly exerted to check the marriages between mere boys and almost infant girls which have done so much physical as well as moral mischief to Hindu society, and also to improve the wretched lot of Hindu widows whose widowhood with all that it entails of menial degradation often begins before they have ever really been wives. To this end the Aryas have not hesitated to encourage female education, and the girls’ orphanage at Jullundar, which is also a home for widows has shown what excellent social results can be achieved in that direction. Again in the treatment of the “untouchable” low-castes, the Arya Samaj may claim to have been the first native body to break new ground and to attempt something akin to the work of social reclamation of which Christianity and in a lesser degree, Islam had hitherto the monopoly. Schools and especially industrial classes have been established in various districts which cannot fail to raise the status of the younger generation and gradually to emancipate the lower castes from the bondage in which they have been hitherto held.”<sup>2</sup>

The first Hindu orphanage was established by the Arya Samaj in the Punjab at Ferozepur, during the lifetime of the Swami, with a splendid and commodious building. Later on a number of other orphanages on similar lines were established at different places in northern India.

1. *Census Report of Punjab 1901*, p. 116.

2. Chirol, *Indian Unrest (1910)*, pp. 100-111.

In 1897-98, there were very severe famines in the country. A very commendable service was rendered by the Samaj in organising relief of distress. Thousands of children were rescued and for them several new orphanages were opened in the Punjab. In 1908, famine relief was organised in the United Provinces. The famine relief included different kinds of other social services as well; organisation of medical relief in the time of pestilence, nursing the sick and helping in the disposal of the dead. The Swami also organised a large scale relief in the Kangra Valley in 1904 at the time of the great earthquake.

Besides, one of the most interesting programmes of the Samaj was to weld together the educated and uneducated by encouraging the study of national languages, of spiritual truth and by insisting on the study of classical Sanskrit, formation of sound and energetic habits by a regulated mode of living, the encouragement of a sound acquaintance with English literature and material progress of the country by spreading knowledge of physical and applied sciences.<sup>1</sup> And in this again, the Samaj had a considerable success.

The Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College, which was described by the Punjab Administration Report of 1901-2 as "one of the most interesting educational enterprises in Northern India," was opened at Lahore in June 1889. The idea regarding it had been originated by the Swami himself. Giving an account of a meeting called by Lahore Arya Samaj on 9 November 1883, after the death of the Swami, thus wrote the *Arya Patrika* of 20 June 1885: "there was one united purpose that the glorious life of the departed Swami should be immortalised, and the proposal to found an Anglo-Vedic College in honour of his memory was unanimously adopted. The sight that followed was worth observing. Though the meeting was composed mostly of middle-class men, from 7,000 to 8,000 rupees were subscribed on the spot. Women and children and even poor menials zealously came forward with their mite." The declared purpose of the college was to (a) "encourage, improve and enforce the study of Hindu literature. (b) To encourage the study of classical Sanskrit and of the *Vedas*. (c) To encourage and enforce the study of English literature and sciences—both theoretical and applied."

The school department of the institution was opened in June 1886, and the college department in June 1889. The progress of the institution was so fast that on 31 December 1913 the total number of students on the school rolls was 1,737, while that on the college rolls was 903. Soon a D.A.V. College at Jullundur, another at Hoshiarpur and the third at Kanpur in U.P. were added, and the total amount of funds at the disposal of the D.A.V. College movement on 31 March 1929 was Rs 2,651,206.

1. Preamble of a draft scheme reg. D. A. V. Collage, Lahore, circulated for public discussion in 1885.



***Gurukula System of Schooling.*** In 1892 the Samaj was divided into two sections which differed in the lines on which the D.A.V. College of Lahore was to be run. The difference of opinion was whether English, Science or the *Vedas* should be given first place in the institution. Those who held the latter opinion, were termed as religious fanatics and were debarred from the management of the College. But they, in order to put their ideas into practice, started a new institution three miles below Hardwar and named it as *Gurukula*. The *Gurukula* was established in 1902 as a result of the efforts chiefly of Munshi Ram, formerly a successful pleader of Jullunder.

Regarding the *gurukula*, again, the views of V. Chirol may be quoted : "Under the system the child is committed at an early age to the exclusive care of a spiritual teacher or guru, who stands to him in *loco parentis* and even more. In the *gurukulas* or seminaries founded by the Arya Samaj, pupils or chelas are admitted between the ages of six and ten. From that moment they are practically cut off from the outer world during the whole course of their studies, which cover a period of 16 years altogether—i.e. ten years in the lower school and six years in the upper, to which they pass up as *Brahmacharis*. During the whole of that period no student is allowed to visit his family, except in cases of grave emergency, and his parents can only see him with the permission of the head of the *gurukula* and not more than once a month. There are at present (1910) three *gurukulas* in the Puajab, but the most important one, with over 250 students, is at Kangri."

Sir James Meston, the Lieutenant-Governor of U.P. who visited the institution on 16 March 1913, remarked: "The *Gurukula* is one of the most original and interesting experiments carried on in these provinces, in fact in the whole of India."

***The Constitution of the Samaj.*** There is a regular constitution of the Samaj, under which *Vedas* alone are to be regarded as an absolute authority. There is to be a principal Arya Samaj in each province, with its branches. Every principal Samaj must have a library of Vedic works in Sanskrit and Aryabhasha, and a weekly named *Arya Prakash*. Members of the staff should be truth-loving and of pure character. The members, particularly the unmarried ones, must give their spare time to the Samaj activities. President of the Samaj, its Secretary and other members are to meet every 8th day. In the meetings, the members would sing the hymns of *Sama Veda* and have discussions without bias. The members must pay one per cent of their income to the Samaj. They should worship only in Vedic manners. The Samaj should perform *Vedic sanskaras* and teach *Vedas* in *Arya Vidyalays*. The Samaj should give attention to uplift the country, both spiritually and materially, and send learned

men to preach among the people. The President and other members of the Samaj should free their minds from pride. Only those who conform to the principles and live a pure life should be admitted to a circle higher than ordinary membership. On every occasion such as marriage, a member should make a donation to the Samaj. An addition or an amendment can be made in the rules after thorough deliberations.

An effective member must accept the ten *Niyamas*, pay one per cent of his income to the Samaj and attend its meetings regularly. A Samaj having at least ten effective members is entitled to send its representatives to the Provincial Assembly.

Each Samaj should have an executive committee consisting of five officials, elected by the vote of effective members. The five officials are to be—President, Vice-President, Secretary, Accountant and a Librarian. It should have its own meeting place and a splendid building for the purpose.

Each province is to have a Provincial Assembly in which the Samajis would send their representatives in proportion to their effective members. The Provincial Assembly can change rules of management, it can organise propaganda, should run one or more papers, raises funds, manages provincial educational institutions, etc. Members of the Assembly are to be elected after every three years, but the officials would be elected every year.

There would be an All India Assembly formed by the representatives of different provincial assemblies.

*Development of the Arya Samaj.* In 1928 the Samaj had the following two All India Organisations: (1) The *Sarva Deshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* and (2) The *Paropkarani Sabha* founded by the Swami himself. It had nine Provincial Assemblies. The number of the Samajis all over the country on the provincial basis was as follows<sup>1</sup> :

Punjab	—	500
U.P.	—	413
Delhi	—	200
C.P. & Berar	—	52
Ajmer	—	100
Bombay	—	30
Bengal & Bihar	—	20
Burma	—	10

1. *Census 1901*, p. 115.

Besides, there were Samajs outside India.

The Samaj of Swami Dayanand was rendering a great service to the country, but as the Punjab Census Report of 1901 remarked, unfortunately its leaders were too much preoccupied with keeping their reforms within the Hindu society. The principles of fatherhood of God and absolute fair play between man and man and nation and nation applied only within the Hindu community, outside of which they had no interaction.

The *Imperial Paper* of Lahore wrote in its issue of 3 October 1888, that the Aryas were inciting their members against Muslims and advising them to avenge themselves upon that community, because they believed that all the evils such as child-marriage and *purdah* were products of the Muslim rule in India.

The *Akbhar-i-Am* wrote in its issue dated 23 February 1889 that some Aryas had spoken against Sikh Gurus and that somebody had published *Granth Sahib* full of mistakes. The Sikhs were getting agitated over this issue. And *Ravi* in its issue dated 7 August 1889 wrote that some person had written a book *Granthi Phobia*, injuring the feelings of the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup>

"The ethical code of Swami Dayanand," wrote Valentine Chirol, "on the other hand, was vague, and he pandered strangely in some directions to the weaknesses of the flesh, and in others to popular prejudices. Nothing in the Vedas, for instance, prohibits either the killing of cattle or the eating of bovine flesh. But, in deference to one of the most universal of Hindu superstitions, Dayanand did not hesitate to include cow-killing amongst the deadliest sins. Here we have in fact the keynote of his doctrines. The sanctity of the cow is the touch-stone of Hindu hostility to both Christian and Moham-medan, and the whole drift of Dayanand's teachings is far less to reform Hinduism than to rouse it into active resistance to the alien influences which threatened, in his opinion, to denationalise it. Hence the outrageously aggressive tone of his writings wherever he alludes either to Christianity or to Mohammedanism. It is the advent of 'meat eating and wine-drinking foreigners, the slaughters of kine and other animals,' that has brought trouble and suffering upon the 'Aryas'—he discards the word Hindu on account of its Persian origin—whilst before they came into the country, India enjoyed 'golden days', and her people were 'free from disease,' and prosperous and contended." In fact, "*Arya for the Aryans*" was the cry that frequently predominated in Dayanand's teachings over that of *Back to the Vedas*.<sup>2</sup>

1. Chhabra, G.S., *Social and Economic History of Punjab (1849-1901)*, pp. 125-26.
2. Chirol, pp. 109-110.

Yet among the Hindus the movement was getting popular as time passed. In 1911, thus, its membership stood at 2,43,000 in the Punjab and this was two and a half times as much as it was in 1901 and six times what it was in 1891 in the same province.<sup>1</sup>

### NORTHBROOK'S FOREIGN POLICY

Northbrook, like, Mayo, followed the policy of Sir John Lawrence towards the frontier states. Instead of following a 'forward policy' and annexing these states to the British territories, he wanted to have a cordon of friendly, strong and independent states on the frontiers which should act as a buffer capable of absorbing a hostile thrust aimed against the British.

#### Burma

One such frontier state was Burma which Northbrook wanted to maintain, "as long as we can as a buffer between our possessions and the Chinese frontier." He said : "While we must insist upon the (Burmese) King's compliance with those demands which are necessary for our honour and interests, we are, in my opinion more particularly bound, in dealing with a state so weak and lying at our mercy, not to push our demands one step further than is necessary and just."<sup>2</sup>

Lower Burma had been annexed as a result of the First Anglo-Burmese War fought in the time of Amherst, and the Second War in that of Dalhousie. King Mindon who ruled over the remaining parts of the country, had refused, despite repeated efforts of Dalhousie, to sign a treaty acknowledging the loss of his territories. Since then the Anglo-Burmese relations did not always remain happy. Two treaties of 1862 and 1867 had established regular political and commercial contacts, and the King had accepted a Resident at Mandalay, but his treaty of friendship with Italy in 1871 and that with France in 1873 incensed the British. Salisbury in England some-how, got anxious to develop trade with Western China, and asked Northbrook to send there a mission for the purpose. Colonel H. Browne, accompanied by a topographer and others, and escorted by only 15 Sikh sepoys, as the King did not want the British troops to march through his country, was sent. The Burmese troops escorted the mission upto the Chinese frontiers where suddenly the mission was attacked by the Chinese troops, some Englishmen on the party were murdered, but with the help of the Burmese troops, the mission itself escaped unhurt. The Burmese themselves were suspected of treachery, but the suspicion could not be proved. Later on, however, when Lisitai, the Chinese Governor of Momein who was

1. Chhabra, G.S., *History of the Punjab*, Vol. II, pp. 349-61.

2. Quoted, Moulton, E.C., *Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration*, p. 221.

said to have inspired the attack, was received by the Burmese King with great distinction, Salisbury proposed strong action unless a satisfactory explanation was received from the Burmese Court. The King explained the matter and gave assurance of not making any such contacts in the future. Salisbury, however, insisted on sending the second mission escorted by the English troops themselves. There were protracted negotiations, and the King was threatened of a war once again, with the result that he accepted the British demand unconditionally.

Bitterness with Burma developed on another account also. There was a small tribal territory of Western Karenni on the south-east of Burma over which the King claimed sovereign rights. This territory was important for its teak, and for its being the only means of communication with China and the Shan States besides the Upper Burma. The British therefore challenged the Burmese claims. Burma resisted, but here again when she was threatened of a war, the King bowed and in 1878 signed a treaty under which both the parties agreed to observe Western Karenni's independence.

There was a loud clamour in the Anglo-Indian community of India which condemned Northbrook's policy as weak, and wanted the Upper Burma also to be conquered. Salisbury also warned the Viceroy against giving an impression that the "British had forgotten their warlike traditions." But Northbrook stuck to his peaceful approach to the matter and earned the appreciation of the educated Indians. Northbrook wrote: "here in India as usual in all such cases, there has been local howl for what they call a spirited policy which means that we should bully the King of Burmah who is unable to resist. I need hardly say that I shall continue to treat him with all proper consideration."<sup>1</sup>

### **Baluchistan**

Kalat, or Baluchistan, was another state towards which Northbrook followed a policy of conciliation, instead of 'forward policy' as proposed by Sir William Mereweather, the Commissioner of Sind who was supported by Salisbury. Kalat was a loose confederacy of some tribal chiefs over which Khudadad Khan ruled. The British relations with the Khan were governed by the Treaty of 1854 under which he was to prevent any raids into the British territories, protect caravans passing through his country, take British advice in his foreign relations and permit them to station troops wherever necessary. Against this the Khan received an annual subsidy of Rs 50,000.

About the time Northbrook arrived in India, there was a civil war going on in the country. The Khan no more enjoyed influence

1. Mallet, B., *Life of Lord Thomas George, Earl of Northbrook*, pp. 90-96.

over the tribal chiefs, caravans were often plundered and even the British territories began to be raided. Mereweather proposed that the Khan should be deposed and somebody else enjoying the support of the tribal chiefs should be placed on the throne. He also suggested that the Marri tribe which had raided the British territories should be blockaded. Northbrook, however, disagreed with such strong proposals, and accepting the peaceful approach of Captain Robert Sandeman, the Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ismail Khan, sent him to contact the different tribal chiefs and establish security of the British frontier, as also of the caravans passing through their territories. Sandeman Mission was a success. Being thus encouraged, the Viceroy sent Sandeman on a second mission to re-establish peace between the Khan and the other chiefs. He was about to achieve success in this mission as well when Mereweather intervened and questioned his authority in bringing the chiefs to sign a peace treaty. His mission thus returned without attaining its objective. Northbrook disliked Mereweather's attitude, transferred the control of Kalat affairs from him to the Punjab authorities and sent Sandeman for the third time in April 1876 to accomplish the mission of his second visit. Sandeman's third mission achieved a complete success, but in the meanwhile Northbrook had resigned his post in India.

### Kashmir

Northbrook, like Mayo, believed that a tighter grip over Kashmir was necessary; first, because of the Russian advance in Central Asia which had to be checked by the development of the British influence in the Eastern Turkistan, the routes which exclusively passed through Kashmir; second, because the tribes on the Kashmir frontier, like Hunza, Nagar Dir, Swat, etc. which could be exploited by Afghanistan, could be effectively controlled from Gilgit via Kashmir alone; thirdly, because the Maharaja of Kashmir also was not reliable. For there was said to be sufficient evidence of his contact with Russia. In 1868 the Maharaja had sent a secret agent to Tashkent at the suggestion of T.H. Thornton, the Secretary to the Punjab Government, and with the approval of Sir John Lawrence himself. The fact, however, was soon forgotten and in the time of the successor of Lawrence the Maharaja began to be charged of "endeavouring to open up direct relations with Russia."<sup>1</sup> In 1873 the Maharaja received a message from a Kashmiri, named Khalikdar, which he had brought from a member of the Russian Mission at Kashgar, expressing the Russian desire to enter into communication with him. The Maharaja forwarded the information to Northbrook, but he, instead of getting reassured, got alarmed of the possibility and consequences of such Russo-Kashmir contacts. And lastly, the Maharaja negotiating trade relations with Yarkand on his own which was not against the terms of the Amritsar Treaty.

1. Kapur, M.L. *op. cit.*, p. 37, quoting records.

In 1867 when an envoy from Yarkand arrived in Kashmir and the commercial treaty was signed, the Maharaja sent full information to the effect to the Government of India. Lawrence was then in power, and he does not seem to have taken much notice of it. But his successor began to smell the possibilities of Russian danger in this as well. The net result of all this was that Northbrook got so much convinced of the need of appointing a Resident in Kashmir to keep the British regularly posted with the day-to-day information, that he did not think it necessary to get the Whitehall's sanction at all.

The proposal for the Resident was thus duly sent, and Northbrook plainly informed the Maharaja that a Resident in Kashmir was necessary so as to watch the Central Asian developments, assuring him at the same time that absolutely no internal interference was intended.

The Maharaja, however, was alarmed. He had before him the example of the Punjab where the appointment of a Resident led ultimately to its annexation. Nor could he believe the assurances of the Governor-General with regard to non-interference in the internal affairs. For even the 'Officer on Special Duty' could not be controlled in this respect. He had brought about some fiscal changes in the valley in 1866 on his own, involving a loss of 3 lakh rupees to the Maharaja, but no protests against this had proved of any avail. The Agent at Leh appointed only for one season, had now already become a permanent feature. The presence of the 'Officer on Special Duty' was also proving quite irksome. The Maharaja pleaded that he had throughout remained faithful to the British, recounted the services which the state had rendered during the great mutiny for which he had declined the rewards of *jagirs* requesting that a favourable British eye on him may be kept instead. Whereas due to such services by states like Patiala, the existing agencies were withdrawn therefrom, an agency was sought to be imposed on him when the Treaty of 1846 did not permit of it. The Maharaja told the Viceroy that his internal administration also was improving and he desired a credit for it instead of punishment.

The Maharaja, however, knew that he could not escape the proposal of a Resident completely, and eventually "himself offered a compromise. The tour of the 'officer on special duty' should be extended from six to eight months, and that of the Leh Commissioner to a full year."<sup>1</sup> Since due to climatic reasons all communications with Central Asia remained suspended for three to four months, the 'officer' could be supposed to be on duty all the year round.

1. Quoting records, Alder, G.J., *British India's Northern Frontiers*, p. 110.



Northbrook's purpose was served. There was nothing much in name, he probably thought, and the 'Officer on Special Duty' himself could be made to do what was required of a Resident. He therefore instructed the Punjab Government through which Kashmir was usually dealt with, to keep this 'officer' fully informed in future, of all that passed between them and Kashmir direct, or through the Kashmir agent at Lahore. Effort, however, was to be made to make the 'Officer on Special Duty' an essential channel of all such communication. The 'Officer' himself was instructed on how he should keep a watch on the Central Asian developments, and later on when the Punjab political jurisdiction on Kashmir was abolished and the Imperial Government began to deal with that state direct, the Maharaja was asked to correspond only through the 'officer' and not direct, as previously he used to do with the Punjab. Northbrook was satisfied with the new arrangement. The grip on Kashmir was tightened.

### Afghanistan

Lord Mayo was succeeded by Lord Northbrook as the Governor-General of India in 1872, and within a short time after this the expansionist policy of Russia in the Central Asia led to the absorption by her of the Khanate of Khiva, which led Sher Ali to believe that his own power in Afghanistan was threatened. In 1873, therefore, he made one more effort to reach an accord with the British whereby he could feel himself safe on his throne. A conference was held at Simla between an Afghan envoy and Lord Northbrook, wherein the envoy requested a written assurance that in case of Russian attack or an attack of any other power on Afghanistan, the British would send a force to help the Amir by whatever route the Amir might require. The Viceroy felt the proposal to be reasonable, and proposed to the Secretary of State for "assuring him that if he unreservedly accepts and acts on our advice in all external relations, we will help him with money, arms and troops if necessary to expel unprovoked invasion. We to be the judge of the necessity." The Secretary of State, however, rejected the proposal, and desired "great caution.... in assuring the Amir of material assistance which may raise undue and unfounded expectations. He already shows symptoms of claiming more than we may wish to give."<sup>1</sup> This incensed the Amir and accepting the present of 5,000 rifles, he refused the proffered sum of Rs 10 lakhs from the Viceroy.

This bad effect on Sher Ali was made worse by two other occurrences. The Indian Government had accepted the thankless task of arbitrating on a boundary dispute in Siestan between Afghanistan and Persia in the time of Mayo, though knowing fully well whatever

1. Quoted, Prasad, B., *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882*. (Delhi, 1967), p. 139.



way the dispute was decided, the other party was bound to get hostile. Yet the decision went against Afghanistan. And secondly, Sher Ali desired his son Abdullah Jan to be recognised as his successor, superceding his eldest son. The British perhaps wisely desisted from committing themselves when they were not sure of Abdulla Jan's abilities but, they blundered in letting it be known that the Amir's successor would get no better treatment than what he himself had got.

The Amir now was convinced that the best solution of his problems lay in establishing a friendly contact with Russia. Russia in fact had already been making her efforts to woo Afghanistan. Kaufmann, the Governor-General of the Russian Turkestan, had informed the Amir in a friendly way in 1870 that the Amir's nephew, Abdur Rehman, taking refuge in Tashkent would receive no help. The Amir still under the charm of Lord Mayo's friendship, forwarded this letter to him as a mark of courtesy. Moreover, the Russian reply to the Amir's announcement of the nomination of Abdullah Jan as his successor was more tactful. All this proved to Sher Ali that Russia was prepared to meet him more than half the way. Henceforward the interchange of letters between Russia and Afghanistan therefore became more frequent.

Lord Northbrook in his relations with Afghanistan in fact proved to be a far greater follower of the policy of 'masterly inactivity' than Lord Lawrence himself was. This was done by him rather to a fanatic extent. If not in 1869, by 1873 at least the Amir had definitely proved himself able, and an enlightened ruler, judged by the Afghan standard. He had definitely realised that it was essential for him to enter into a closer relationship either with Russia or the British, and he had spontaneously and deliberately given his preference to the latter. But the British not only rejected a definite opportunity of securing their interests in Afghanistan, but Northbrook also seriously offended the Amir by rebuking him for treacherously putting his eldest son, Yakub Khan, into prison.

In March 1874, the Cabinet in England was changed. Disraeli replaced Gladstone as the Prime Minister, while Salisbury replaced Argyll as the Secretary of State for India. The new Prime Minister was convinced that his predecessor had lowered the prestige of England in the Central Asia. In 1873, Russia had assured Great Britain that she was not interested in the occupation of Khiva, but shortly after this she did exactly the reverse. On 10 May 1874 General Lomakin was appointed as the military governor of this new southern province, and promptly he issued a circular letter to all the Turkoman tribes, claiming a supreme authority over them. In the meanwhile Kaufmann's correspondence with Sher Ali increased, and when the British protested, they were told that it was only a complimentary correspondence. When Salisbury desired this also

to be discontinued, he got a rebuff.

Unfortunately the new Cabinet took a very serious view of the situation. Instead of taking a stiff line of attitude with Russia herself, to which there are definite reasons to believe that she should have responded, the Cabinet took the view that even if the Russian Emperor and ministers did not violate wilfully their engagements with the British, their authority on the distant agents and military chiefs being very slight, the Russian policy was bound to be only tentative. The forces stimulating aggressive instincts existed constantly and not much reliance could be placed on the mere verbal guarantees of the Russian authorities. The best solution of the problem under the circumstances, they concluded, would be to change the old policy of Lord Lawrence and seek additional security in two directions, first, that England should secure a more commanding position in Afghanistan, and second that the Amir should accept a British agent in his country. Towards the first direction negotiations were started with the *Khan* of Kalat for the dual object of occupying Quetta and for the appointment of a British agent at Kalat which might be the forerunner of the other British agents in Central Asia in case the Amir of Afghanistan refused to accept one. A treaty was ultimately signed with the *Khan* in 1876, whereby the British secured the occupation of Quetta.

Towards the second direction, the Secretary of State, Salisbury, suggested to Northbrook that a British agent should be placed at Herat and possibly at Kandahar with the object of supplying "that more exact and constant information," which was "necessary to the conduct of a mere circumspect policy at the present juncture." Lord Northbrook held a dispassionate enquiry among those who were best qualified in the matter, and then wrote to Salisbury: "After a full examination of what took place at Umballa in 1869 we do not think it can be fairly said that the Ameer ever accepted the proposal of a British officer at Herat...All those best qualified to form an opinion say that the Ameer would strongly object to the presence of British officers in Afghanistan...Unless therefore it is the desire of the Government at home to change the policy. . .and to show less desire to keep on cordial terms than has hitherto been thought desirable, we cannot recommend a formal announcement to the Ameer that we desire the establishment of a British Agent at Herat."<sup>1</sup>

The proposal of a British Agent was indeed strange. In 1869 and 1873 when the Amir had approached the British for a defensive alliance, he was told that the Russian danger did not exist, but now all of a sudden it was proposed to convince him that the Russian danger did after all exist and that he should admit a British Resident within his territory against his will. Lord Northbrook saw no logic

1. Mallet, p. 108; see also Prasad, B., *op. cit.*, pp. 144-63.

in this proposal and he wrote to the Secretary of State : "I cannot agree with your suspicions about the Amir, they are not confirmed by any one of the authority." But the Secretary of State was not in a mood to listen to the Viceroy, and repeated his proposal of sending a mission saying "there would be many advantages in ostensibly directing it to some object of smaller political interest which it will not be difficult...to find or, if need be, to create."<sup>1</sup>

Under these circumstances, therefore, there was no alternative before Northbrook but to resign. But before he did so he warned the Secretary of State that an attempt to impose a mission on Afghanistan against the will of the Amir was bound to subject the British "to the risk of another unnecessary and costly war in Afghanistan before many years are over."<sup>2</sup>

In the words of Lord Cromer : "As an Indian politician Lord Northbrook belonged to the school of Lord Lawrence. He was a warm defender of the rights of the native princes and was very strongly convinced of the harm done by Lord Dalhousie in violating those rights. He was against all external aggression. He abhorred the political and diplomatic school of those who held that Oriental intrigue should be met by counter intrigue. His weapons were plain truth and unimpeachable."

When later in the time of Lord Lytton his policy towards Afghanistan was changed, the results were disastrous. But then the authors of the forward policy blamed Lord Northbrook for that ; the argument of the charge being that he had alienated Sher Ali by refusing to give him the guarantee of protection which he had demanded. Northbrook, however, reminded in the Lords that at that time the question had been fully discussed in that House, and "the opinion of the present Conservative Government as expressed in that debate was that it was quite impossible to give Sher Ali what he wanted, viz., an unconditional guarantee of protection."

Lord Northbrook resigned on a question which, according to Mallet, "placed him even more conspicuously in the position of the champion of Indian as against British prepossession and interests."<sup>1</sup> Lord Cromer explains the matter : "In this instance strong pressure was exerted by the Government of Lord Beaconsfield (in February 1874) to remit the import duty of 5 per cent which was levied on Manchester piece-goods. Lord Northbrook stoutly refused to yield to this pressure. Though himself a strong free trader, he argued with answerable force that the duty was levied not for protection but for revenue purposes, that its abolition would involve the imposition

1. See Bernard Mallet, *Thomas George Earl of Northbrook*, (1908), p. 91.

1. *ibid.*, p. 105.

of other taxation in a form very distasteful to the Indian people, and that it was politically most unwise to have the appearance of sacrificing the interests of India to those of Manchester." Salisbury was very much perturbed. He also acutely differed with Northbrook on the issue of appointing an agent in Afghanistan. Rather than precipitate a serious situation, Northbrook resigned.

The reign of Lord Northbrook in India has been characterised as unimportant, as it saw neither a war nor any far-reaching internal change or reform. But writes his biographer : "there is all the difference in the world between a policy of mere inaction or reaction and Lord Northbrook's policy of deliberate abstention from brilliant or sensational measures, inspired as it was by a statesmanlike perception of the requirements of the Indian population at that particular stage of political progress. Such a line of policy, coupled with a vigorous supervision of the administrative machine in all its branches and especially in that of financial control, was precisely what India required..." On 8 September 1884 Lord Northbrook himself wrote to Lord Dufferin: "The main object of my policy was to let things go quietly on—to give the land rest as some of the natives phrased it..."

But the argument forwarded by the biographer, Mallet, as well as the justification of his policy given by Northbrook, both seem to lack the warmth of reason. The old taxes in the time of Northbrook were curtailed, and no new taxes were levied. And for this a due credit may also be given to the Viceroy. But he is completely relieved of this credit the moment we realise that all this was done at the cost of the digging of canals, the construction of new bridges and other works of reform. Instead of planning new constructive activities, he did away even with the old plans of reform ; and then gloried in the fact that he had been able to make the Indian budget a surplus one. The land needed a rest from additional financial burdens, and not from additional reform activities. And Northbrook should best have won the sympathies of India if without new taxes, and with economies elsewhere or with some other sources of income in which India was least exploited for the sake of England, her reform and constructive activities had gone apace.

Lord Northbrook chose his own type of people to run his Government. On this commented the *Pioneer* on 1 April 1876 : "In his selection of men we venture to think that the Viceroy has not shown that rare gift of insight which in truth is found in but few statesmen. It has been the day of safe men ; of men, that is, who are safe to do little or nothing." Here too, Mallet tries to justify the Viceroy's conduct by saying that the real trouble lay in the fact that "he was too apt to assume that others were actuated by the same lofty and unselfish ideals as those which inspired his own conduct." This reply, however, proves that the Viceroy had no insight on such matters.

Still, there is no lack of matter on which Northbrook may really deserve our appreciation. The Bengal Famine of 1874 and how, for the first time, the efforts were made to save every life, have already been discussed. Further, when in the proceedings of Lord Salisbury he saw an attempt to subordinate the interests of the Indian economy to those of the British, he resisted and successfully thwarted the attempt. And for this too he deserves our appreciation as a man of principle and conscience. But despite all irritations, the credit goes to him that he kept the balance of his temper so long as he could get his work done.

Being singularly devoid of the pride of race, Northbrook's policy towards the Indians was in accord with that of Ripon on whose Illbert Bill he remarked : "This however is an absolute necessity as Natives acquire an education nearly equal to our... Ripon's main lines of policy in these respects have my cordial support."

Once committed to an agreement, Northbrook was a man who would never prove false to it, come what may. His export of rice when there was a serious famine in India, his blunt refusal to work against the agreement signed with the Amir of Afghanistan, and his scrupulous adherence to the treaties and agreements made with the Indian princes; these are all the instances which can be quoted in his favour.

Lord Curzon wrote of him : "Lord Northbrook was a quite sound man of what in England would be termed the Whig type mind, just and humane in his administration and conscientious in all his acts... He never lost his regard for India, and of all the ex-Viceroy's was the one who showed the most continuous interest in Indian affairs, corresponding with me regularly during my term of office, as he had done with my predecessors, even though he had left the country for thirty years."<sup>1</sup>

After he resigned his office in India, Northbrook was raised to an earldom. When Gladstone came to power in 1880, he was appointed First Lord of Admiralty and given a seat in the Cabinet where he worked as Principal Adviser on Eastern Affairs. He was made Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire in 1889, and fifteen years later he died at Stratton, on 15 November 1904. He was buried at Micheldever.

Before closing we may quote Viscount Mersey : "Northbrook was a Whig of the best tradition, a thoroughly competent administrator with a rapid mastery of complicated financial problems. In India he

1. Curzon, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

was determined to govern for the benefit of the native population, an aim in which he succeeded. A Fellow of the Royal Society, with a wide knowledge of art, he belonged to an exceptionally gifted family, four members of which within the space of fifty-seven years had received peerage."<sup>1</sup>

**1. Mersey. V., *The Viceroys and Governors-General of India*, p. 91.**

## Earl of Lytton, 1876-1880

### THE INTERNAL POLICY

“A man of ambition, imagination, vanity and strength,” as Disraeli said of him, Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton, was born on 8 November 1831. His father, Edward Bulwer, 1st Lord Lytton, was a great novelist. His mother Rosina also belonged to a well-to-do family. He got his education at Harrow and also Bonn in Germany, developed literary talents hereditated from his father, and distinguished himself by publishing his poems of considerable merit in two volumes before he even attained the age of thirty. As a member of the Foreign Service, he occupied a number of European posts. He married in 1869, Edith, the daughter of Hon. Edward Villiers who was a brother of the British Foreign Minister Lord Clarendon. In 1872 he was appointed Minister in Lisbon, the next year his father died and he became a peer. He declined the offer of Governorship of Madras in 1875 and wanted to settle down to a peaceful career of a poet, but the next year when he was offered the Governor-Generalship of India, his wife persuaded him to accept the post.

#### **Famine**

Almost the first thing Lytton faced soon after his arrival in India, was an appalling famine. The years 1876-78 brought misery and woe to this land once again, sapping vitality and destroying lives. Two successive monsoons failed, opening the flood-gates of a famine the effects of which lasted long. Mysore and Hyderabad, several districts of Bombay and a considerable part of Madras suffered heavily, while the North-West Provinces and Oudh also could not escape the effects. In all, about 39 million people, spread over about two hundred thousand square miles of land, suffered. Relief was

organised, and Lytton considered it so liberal, that after visiting the relief camps in Madras he remarked : "The people in them, who do no work of any kind, are bursting with fat and naturally enjoying themselves thoroughly." The camps were "like picnics," he said. Still, however, only in one year 1877-78, the number of deaths in Bombay alone was about eight lakhs more than the normal figure.

There were certain defects in the relief methods, and deciding to make a serious study of the problem, it goes to the credit of Lord Lytton that he appointed a high powered Commission under the chairmanship of General Sir Richard Strachey to make recommendations as to how the repetition of the misery could be avoided.

The Commission carried out its investigations and submitted a report in 1880, "formulating general principles and suggesting particular measures of a preventive or protective character."<sup>1</sup> The main recommendations of the report were : (1) that the state should accept its responsibility of organising relief in times of famine ; but (2) that the administration of relief should be done "not to check the growth of thrift and self-reliance among the people, or to impair the structure of society, which resting as it does in India upon the moral obligation of mutual assistance, is admirably adapted for common effort against a common misfortune;" (3) that under the circumstance, therefore, the relief can best be administered only in the shape of work to the able-bodied, and the gratuitous relief only to the disabled; (4) that the employment should be offered before actually the physical efficiency of the able-bodied is wrecked ; (5) that the relief work should be a work of permanent utility, and it should be such as to employ a good number of workers for a considerable time ; (6) that the workmen should be provided with proper medical facilities, temporary markets and huts to live in ; (7) that in the adjustment of wages, the sex, age and class of a person should be given a due consideration, special allowances should be fixed on children, and everything should be re-adjusted from time to time ; (8) that the cooked food being unpopular among the people, the gratuitous relief should be in the shape of raw grain and money, with the cooked food being reserved only for the second line of defence ; (9) that for the distribution of gratuitous relief, the affected area should be divided into circles, each of which should be placed under an experienced district officer who should work with the cooperation of the local persons ; (10) that for the distribution of relief among the *pardah-nashin* ladies, the committees of Indian gentlemen should be made use of ; (11) that except in exceptional circumstances, the private traders should be given full facilities to supply the food requirements of the workmen in the open market, though their behaviour and practices should be closely watched ; (12) that the land revenue in the affected areas should be suspended

1. Lovett, Sir H.V., *Cambridge History of India*, VI, pp. 294-311.



or remitted, as necessitated by the actual circumstances, and loans should be offered for the purchase of seed grains and bullocks ; (13) that the local landlords should also be encouraged through loans, etc. to provide relief works on their own estates to the distressed tenants and the labourers ; (14) that wherever required, encouragement and facilities should be provided for the migration of cattle to the grassy forests ; (15) that in order to develop a sense of responsibility both in the people and the local governments, the burden of the expenditure should be thrown on the local taxation, the Centre supplementing the funds only after a careful assessment of the requirements ; (16) that to make them responsible for the provision of the major part of the funds, the representative members of the tax-paying bodies should be associated with the administration of relief ; (17) that in the light of these recommendations the relief scheme should be prepared in advance so as to be used without any delay at the time of emergency ; and (18) that a provisional famine code be prepared, which may be adopted by the local governments to fit in their respective requirements subject to the Central control.

Such thus were the recommendations which truly form a golden page of the history of famine relief measures in India. The proposals, no doubt, were accepted, and it was ultimately decided that Rs 15 million should always in future be provided in the budget, under the head 'Famine Relief and Insurance', a part of which may be used for the construction of the protective works such as the railways and the canals.

It was on the basis of these recommendations that the Famine Code of 1883 was formulated, which guided the formation of the various provincial famine codes. The code thus prepared divided itself into different parts, the first dealing with the precautions to be adopted in the normal times ; the second dealing with the measures to be followed in case of an imminent relief campaign ; the third with the duties of the different concerns when the relief campaign has already been started ; the fourth with the manner by which the affected area should be divided into the 'scarcity' and the 'famine' districts, and their further division into the relief circles ; and the rest with certain other connected problems.

### **Vernacular Press Act 1878**

Prestige gained in one field, however, was soon lost in another. An impetuous Governor-General who came to India determined to follow 'forward policy' on the frontiers, soon plunged India into another costly war with Afghanistan against which Northbrook had sounded all his warnings, but which were contemptuously dismissed by the Conservative Ministry in England as a philosophy emanating from weakness, lack of ambition and immaturity of perception. The story of the First Afghan War was repeated. Indian blood and

money were once again wasted on an exercise which brought no gains but misery. The vernacular Press in India naturally grew critical, and condemned the headstrong Viceroy for his lack of imagination. This enraged Lytton who addressed a cable to the Secretary of State explaining the "increasing violence of the native Press, now directly provocative of rebellion," secured his approval for a Press.

Law on the lines of the Irish Coercion Act of 1870, on the same day pushed the legislation through and got it enacted in a few hour's time. The law was named as the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, but it was termed by the people as Gagging Act, as in fact it was. Under the Act, magistrates were empowered, with the previous sanction of the Local Government to call upon a publisher or a printer to deposit a security, or enter into a bond not to publish or print any matter promoting mutual jealousy and hatred between different races and against the Government. In case of failure, the security could be confiscated. They were also given the option to submit proofs for censor, and not to publish any matter without the Government approval if they wanted to escape the risk. The Act was applicable only to the vernacular papers, and not to the English, and there was no provision for any appeal against the decision of a magistrate.

While the Act was generally supported by the Englishmen, and according to Sir A. Arbuthnot it actually stopped seditious writings and encouraged legitimate interests of the Press the Indian public opinion was bound to feel bitter. Protest meetings were held, and agitations were started in India as well as in England. Appeals were addressed to the British Parliament to get the Act repealed, though to no avail. The Act was obviously too harsh against the Indian Press, which according to S.N. Banerjea was muzzled and gagged. Sir Ferozeshah Mehta wrote in an article in the *Times of India*, that though some papers did sometimes exaggerate the matters and practised angry recrimination, this practice in no way amounted to a treason. Nor was it easy to draw a definite line between a severe criticism and a licentious abuse. And he further went on, that if the Act was not immediately withdrawn, it would annihilate the growing class of reasonable and moderate writers before they actually matured, it would destroy a definite source of information for the Government to gauge the public opinion, it would suppress healthy political growth, destroy useful criticism and intensify mischievous tendencies. Sir Erskine Perry called it an ill-conceived measure, while according to Mody : "Perhaps the worst feature of the Act was that it exempted from its operation all English newspapers, though in many cases they were the greatest sinners."<sup>1</sup> But Lord Lytton was not the man to be influenced by such criticisms. The Act continued, and interestingly enough, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* transformed itself from vernacular to English.

1. Mody, Perry, *Sir Ferozeshah Mehta*, p. 521.

### Other Changes

Another notable event of the time of Lord Lytton was some fiscal reforms introduced by Sir John Strachey, the Financial Member of the Viceroy's Council. One of the most important reforms of John Strachey related to salt tax, which had hitherto been levied in different provinces at widely varied rates. Under such circumstances the smuggling of salt from one province to another, and from the Indian states, where it was not taxed, to the British territories was natural, for the prevention of which there was an impenetrable inland customs line, about 2,500 miles in length, running from Attock on the Indus to the Mahanadi in the Deccan, and made at some places of a wall, while at other places of cactus hedge or ditch. Such a long line required as many as 13,000 men to be patrolled by, as already referred to under Northbrook. The remedy of this fiscal anachronism lay in two directions, first, that the salt tax in different provinces be made uniform, and secondly that the salt manufacture in the Indian States be controlled. Towards the second direction, certain steps had already been taken under Lord Mayo and Northbrook, as a result of which the customs line was shortened in the time of the latter as its southern end by 1,000 miles. The remaining of its 1,500 miles were swept away by John Strachey who by his efforts was able to reduce the variations in the salt taxation in different provinces to a very narrow margin.

Steps were also taken by Strachey to establish Free Trade in the country. The duty on sugar levied at the inland customs line was abolished in 1878 together with the import duties on 29 other commodities. The more significant step of Strachey, however, was his abolition of the five per cent *ad valorem* import duty levied on the coarser kinds of cotton cloth for which there was a good market in this country. The majority of the members of the Viceroy's Council however criticised it on the ground that it was against the Indian interest, and was aimed only at pleasing the ruling party in England who, to win the political support of the British manufacturers, pushed through the commons a resolution in 1877 demanding the Indian Government to take this step. But being determined to oblige the Home Government, Lytton did not care for this opposition and passed a measure in regard to this by using his constitutional power of overriding the majority.<sup>1</sup> The Calcutta Chamber of Commerce registered its protest that "various sections of the people of England have more influence in determining the character of the financial disposition in India than the interests and express wishes of the people under the Government of Your Excellency."

1. We have discussed the matter at length under Lord Northbrook, and we saw how the question embittered his relations with Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India.

Among other reforms of Lord Lytton were his foundation of the Statutory Civil Service in 1879. The Charter Act of 1833 and the royal proclamation of 1858 had promised that no native of India would be debarred from holding any place or office under the Government of India by reason of his nationality, religion, caste, colour or creed. But not much had so far been done to fulfil these promises. Lord Lytton's policy under the circumstances, as he himself remarked, was : "Define more clearly the promises which have been given vaguely and indeed so rashly. Cautiously circumvent them, but then make them realities within their necessary limits." Working on this policy, the above reform was introduced under which one-sixth of the posts hitherto held by members of the covenanted service were now to be held by Indians nominated by the provincial governments with the approval of the Viceroy-in-Council and the Secretary of State. The Statutory Civil Service occupied a position mid-way between the Uncovenanted and Covenanted Service, and the candidates before their appointment had to serve a term of two years' probation and pass certain special tests. The new service, however, failed to attract candidates from higher classes, and those who came could best have been appointed through ordinary subordinate service. Lytton's real intention was "to exclude educated Indians in favour of rich young men of social eminence."<sup>1</sup> But he failed. The new system had to be abolished after eight years of experiment.

### Financial Decentralisation

Lord Lytton carried Mayo's policy of financial decentralisation a step forward. By his Resolution of 1877 he transferred to the Provincial Governments some more heads such as land revenue, general administration, excise, stationary, law, justice, stamps, etc. The transferred revenue and expenditure was calculated on the basis of the figures for the year 1877-78. But since estimated normal income from these sources fell short of the expenditure on them, an "adjusting assignment" was fixed by the Centre for a limited period for each province. And it was laid down that if a local government spent less of the assignment, the difference would be added to the provincial balance, while if it spent more, the difference would be deducted.

The Resolution also imposed certain additional obligations on the local governments. They had to observe all the standing orders and rules embodied gradually in the financial codes by the Centre. They still had to submit their estimates and accounts every year, and they could not, during a particular year, spend beyond the estimates even from their own balances, without communicating to the Centre. They in fact could not budget beyond the funds at their disposal, nor were they permitted to exhaust their balances in the Imperial Treasury.

1. *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 361.

It was expressly laid down that the local governments were in no way to carry the impression that the Centre had relinquished its "absolute and unconditional control over all money in the public treasury." The Centre still reserved to itself the right of fixing yearly grant to each province for capital outlay on local works, and each province had for the purpose to submit a report clearly indicating "the scope of the project if the estimated cost was below 10 lakhs of rupees and detailed plans and estimates if beyond that sum." And the Central officers could inspect these works at any time. The provinces got no borrowing powers, though debentures could be issued by them for local works under the rules laid down by the Centre.

Since separate contracts were made with each province for the introduction of these reforms, they slightly varied in their scope for each. But it was not compulsory for every province to accept, as Madras did not and continued to work on the old settlement of Mayo.

Thus as it is obvious, the local governments had to continue sending their administrative reports and proceedings regularly to the Centre, and the Central control and superintendence was not relaxed. The Centre continued occasionally to issue general lines of policy, and the local governments had to work on them. Still the new arrangement had its advantages. The provinces developed their interest in different branches of revenue administration, and secured a free budget of as much as £16,000,000.

### **Lytton's Resolution of 1877**

Further steps towards decentralisation of finances and improvement of the existing system were taken by Lord Lytton. Resolution of 1877 passed by Lytton transferred some more heads to the local governments.

### **General**

Lord Lytton opposed the tendency of the Indian courts to award lenient punishments to Europeans assaulting their Indian servants. He also suggested that an Indian Privy Council consisting of the Indian ruling princes be formed to advise the Governor-General. Though his proposal was rejected, a body of this type was established after the Government of India Act, 1919 under the name of the Chamber of Princes. The Mahomedan Anglo-Oriental College, which later on developed into the Aligarh University was founded by Lytton. It was during his time that the British Parliament passed the Royal Titles Act, under which the English sovereign assumed the title of *Kaisar-i-Hind*. The Act lowered the position of the Indian prince, though only in a formal way. Lord Lytton held a magnificent

*Durbar* at Delhi in 1877, in which Queen Victoria was proclaimed as the Empress of India. Huge amount of expenditure was incurred on this gorgeous pageant, which ill-contrasted with the background of a crushing famine and devastating war. Roberts has tried to justify this action by remarking that the "ceremonials of this nature can hardly be postponed, and the members of the civil service, as they stood in the great assembly on the famous Ridge, must have recognised that there was a measure of political wisdom in occasionally displaying...something of the might and splendour of the empire in which both British servants of the Crown and Indian rulers and statesmen occupied each his appointed place."<sup>1</sup> There may be a sense in the argument that such ceremonial cannot be postponed, but it surpasses our imagination that the *Durbar* needed to be of 'unsurpassed magnificence' to demonstrate to the Indians the might of the empire which should better have been displayed in Afghanistan.

## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

### The Circumstances

Lord Lytton succeeded Lord Northbrook as Viceroy in 1876, determined to change the old policy of Lawrence and destined to bring about the second catastrophe precisely on the lines of the first, and thereby to dig a grave for his reputation as a statesman. He came to India with the specific instructions that Sher Ali was to be given what he had asked for in 1873. Or in other words, his younger son Abdulla Jan was to be recognised as the heir to his throne, the Amir was to get a definite pledge of the British help in case of a foreign aggression, and he would get a fixed and augmented subsidy. And in return for this, the Amir was to agree to admit a British Resident at Herat. The Cabinet gave a free hand to Lytton to select the manner and the time of the realisation of the British desire, and therefore the blunders that were now committed were mainly the responsibility of Lord Lytton himself.

The first thing Lytton did was to ask Sher Ali to receive a complimentary British mission which was politely refused, the Amir forwarding that there was no necessity of doing so. In the meanwhile through the native British agent at Kabul, the Amir let it be known to the British that the main reasons for his refusing to receive a mission were firstly, that if he received a British mission, he would not be able to refuse a similar mission from Russia; and secondly, that the character of his people was such that he would not be able to protect the mission from them. Lytton however was not satisfied with the reply which he termed as a "contemptuous disregard of the British interests in Central Asia". In

1. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 462,

October Lord Lytton's interview with the British Muslim agent at Kabul was arranged at Simla where the agent was told that Afghanistan was like "an earthen pipkin between two iron pots," i.e. Russia and the British, and that if the Amir remained on good terms with the British their military power "could be spread around him as a ring of iron and if he became our enemy, it could break him as a reed."

In the meanwhile, the British had carried on their negotiations with the Khan of Kalat with whom a treaty was signed in 1876 whereby the British were able to secure Quetta which commanded the Bolan Pass, and which had been used by their army as a base during the First Afghan War. Sher Ali naturally felt that the occupation of Quetta was a step towards the British occupation of Kandahar itself, and he still continued his resistance against accepting a British mission. Sayyad Nur Muhammad, a minister of Sher Ali, was sent for a conference with Sir Lewis Pelly in January 1877 at Peshawar, where the minister politely told that "The British nation is great and powerful, and the Afghan people cannot resist its power, but the people are self-willed and independent and prize their honour above life." And if an Amir wanted to retain his throne in Afghanistan, he could not afford to let it be known to his people that it was ruling with the help of a foreign power. Unfortunately in March, when the conference was still going on, Sayyad Nur Muhammad died. Lytton got his chance, and despite the fact that a successor to Nur Muhammad was on his way from Kabul, he declared the conference at an end. All communications with the Amir were stopped, though Lytton declared to the Afghans that "so long as they are not excited by their ruler or others to acts of aggression upon the territories or friends of the British government, no British soldier will ever be permitted to enter Afghanistan uninvited."

These assurances of Lytton, however, were dishonest and not meant to be kept. For simultaneously with them he started the policy of "gradual disintegration and weakening of the Afghan power," as he himself admitted. He developed his contacts with the north-west frontier tribes and through their territories he tried to push the English outposts towards the borders of Afghanistan. A British agency was established at Gilgit as a result of Lytton's confidential arrangement with the Maharaja of Kashmir. And in this way he tried to make Afghanistan feel that "we are exceedingly powerful and highly civilised, and they are comparatively weak and half barbarous," and therefore though Afghanistan and other such states were independent, they "must be dealt with on the understanding that they occupy a distinctly inferior position...that they are not to be permitted to follow a course of policy which exposes us to danger."

In the meanwhile certain developments took place in Europe. There were troubles in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875, and the



Serbians and the Montenegrins rose in arms against the tottering Turkish Empire in 1876. In sympathy with the insurgents Russia declared war against Turkey and secured certain advantages from her on the Black Sea by the Treaty of San Stefano signed in March 1878. Great Britain, as it is well known, was averse to Russia developing any influence near her access-route to her eastern empire. She refused to recognise the treaty, and occupying Cyprus with the Turkish permission, prepared for a war against Russia. The war catastrophe was however averted by the German mediation, and the Congress of Berlin held in June and July 1878 dispossessed Russia of her advantages. In the meanwhile great provocations had been given to Russia by irresponsible utterances of some British authorities and by the movement of some Indian troops to Malta by the Suez Canal. Determined to weaken the British power in Europe, Russia therefore tried to develop some outlet for the warlike energies of the Indian Government towards Afghanistan. It was a Russian game to busy England in a war against Afghanistan, and though she could not draw any advantage out of it, she succeeded in her plan of an Anglo-Afghan war.

In June 1878 Kaufmann proposed to the Amir of Afghanistan a treaty on similar terms as offered to him by Lytton. The Amir refused, but determined to carry the policy through, on 13 June, the very day of the opening of the Congress of Berlin, General Stoletoff left Tashkent for Kabul, supported by three columns of troops. Sher Ali's protests and appeals were all brushed aside, and he was threatened by the Tsar that if any harm came to Stoletoff, he would be held responsible, and that his nephew and rival Abdur Rehman would be supported for the Afghan throne. Sher Ali had to yield with reluctance, and signed a definite treaty for a permanent and perpetual friendship with Russia.

The arrival of a Russian mission in Afghanistan was a signal for Lytton to take desperate decision with the approval of the Home authorities, to impose a treaty and a British mission upon Afghanistan immediately. Lytton's letter reached the Amir on 7 August, proposing that an envoy would be sent, and that Afghanistan would have to agree not to enter into negotiations with any other state without the British permission, and that it would have to admit a British agent at Herat for a permanent residence, and to agree that the British had a right to send a British officer for a conference with him at any time they chose. On the same day Abdullah Jan, the heir-apparent died, and threw the Amir into utter despondency. The Russian agent urged upon the Amir to delay his reply till the Russian Emperor was informed and he made England desist from her action. Lytton however was not going to be intimidated. On 30 August he despatched a Muslim envoy to Kabul to announce the approach of the British mission. Sir Neville Chamberlain who headed the British mission, set out from Peshawar. But the advance



escort was met by an Afghan officer at Ali Masjid, and told politely but firmly that they could not be permitted to proceed without an order from the Amir. The British envoy therefore had to return to Peshawar.

Lord Lytton boiled with rage, and declared that the "Amir's policy was to make fools of us in the sight of all Central Asia and all India..." He wrote to the Home Government falsely reporting that the British mission had been "forcibly repulsed," and requested them to sanction the declaration of war.

Lord Lytton's apologists assert that he had at this time manifold problems to face. There was at this time not a mere possibility of the invasion of India, there was rather a widespread belief of its likelihood. And coupled with this was his difficulty of having only indefinite instructions from Home where nobody was prepared to accept the responsibility. Under these circumstances therefore there was no alternative for him. He issued an ultimatum on 2 November requiring of the Amir to reply by 20 November consenting to a permanent British mission in his country, and a "full and suitable apology", failing which he would have to face the calamities of an invasion.

Viewed from any angle, Lord Lytton's action seems to be rash and unstatesmanlike. Sher Ali's serious protests and appeals to Russia had clearly shown that he had received the Russian mission with only the utmost reluctance. The best approach to the problem under the circumstance should therefore have been to contact Russia directly on the matter. Moreover, whatever pretext of taking a desperate action for Lytton existed, that too had vanished, since the Russian mission left Afghanistan the moment they learnt that a British mission was on its way to Kabul. Here was a golden bridge for retreat, and the best policy after this should have been to express British satisfaction and try to win back the friendship of the Amir.

### **The War**

But Lytton was determined to show that "we are exceedingly powerful and highly civilised, and they are comparatively weak and half barbarians," he closed his eyes to any possibility of an honourable settlement, and pushed his warlike schemes through. Though late, the Amir's reply dated 19 November reached Lord Lytton on 30 November, wherein he announced his willingness to accept a British mission. But the reply was declared to be inadequate, as it offered no "full and suitable apology." Moreover, Lord Lytton had ordered his forces to march on the very day the ultimatum expired.

Immediately after the declaration of the war the British army marched into Afghanistan through three passes: Major-General

Roberts moving up the Kurram valley, General Stewart marching through the Bolan Pass on to Kandahar, and Sir Samuel Browne marching on to Jallalabad through the Khyber Pass. In vain did Sher Ali appeal for help to Kaufmann; for the latter advised him to make peace with the British, because any help by Russia to Sher Ali would involve nullification of the recent agreement at Berlin which Russia could ill-afford to do at the time when her resources had already been seriously depleted by the recent war. The utmost that Russia could do for the Amir was that her ambassador in London would secure an assurance that the integrity of Afghanistan would not be violated. But this assurance too was not indeed meant to be kept.

The Amir in fact had been utterly deceived by Russia, which encouraged high expectations in him, but when the time came for action she quietly vacated her friendly promises leaving Sher Ali alone to handle his problems as best as he could. The latter was utterly incapable of standing the British might alone. Almost no resistance was offered to the marching British troops, and Sher Ali retired quietly to Russia, dying at Masar-i-Sharif on 21 February 1879, broken-hearted and a physical wreck to which he had been reduced by a disease.

Negotiations were now opened with Sher Ali's son, Yakub Khan; and with him the Treaty of Gandamak was signed on 26 May 1879, whereby the new Amir assigned to the British the districts of Kurram, Pishin and Sibi, together with the Kurram Pass; he agreed to admit a British Resident at Kabul and agents at Herat and certain other places; and committed himself to conduct his foreign relations only with the advice of the British. The Amir was to get an annual subsidy of six lakh rupees, and a definite support at the British discretion in money, men and arms in case of a foreign aggression. The British also bound themselves to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan, except those at Kandahar which would be evacuated in autumn.

Lytton's victory in Afghanistan was thus complete, and he must have felt satisfied and joyous in his heart over a success so grand and yet so cheaply secured; little knowing that his stars were already at work to bring about a ruin of his ambitions in Afghanistan, and to give a political funeral to his reputation as a statesman the like of which few Viceroys of India had suffered throughout her history. It was very doubtful whether the choice of the new Amir by the British was worth a moment's confidence. For Roberts had already noted his shifting eyes, retreating forehead and a lack of vigour. In fact it had been desired by Lytton that a mission at Herat alone should be established, and it was at the suggestion of the new Amir himself that the one at Kabul was also established. That alone was a proof strong enough to believe that the Amir was not going to win

any favour with his people who preferred to die rather than to be ruled by a ruler helped and advised by infidels.

It is said that history often repeats itself, but it is rarely believed that it can do this so faithfully as in the case of the Second Afghan War. Sir Louis Cavagnari reached Kabul as the British Resident on 24 July. He as H. H. Dodwell writes,<sup>1</sup> was an admirable man in crises, but less suited for a position of delicacy. On 2 September, he sent a telegram to Lytton reporting "All well", and on the 3 September a mutinous Afghan army attacked his residence, and put him together with the whole of his escort to death. Yakub Khan utterly failed to protect the British, or perhaps he was not willing to do so. In a telegram to General Roberts who had returned to Simla, the Amir signalled : "Confusion reached heights beyond control; people from city and surrounding country poured into Bala Hissar, began destroying artillery park and magazine. All troops and people attacked Residency. I, Amir, sent Dand Shah to help Envoy. He was unhorsed at Residency by stones and spears; is dying. I then sent... my own son with Koran, also Mullah, to troops, but no use. Disturbance continued till now, evening; confusion is beyond conception."<sup>2</sup> It was a bitter and personal shock to Lord Lytton, who did not hesitate frankly to admit that the "web of policy so carefully and patiently woven, has been rudely shattered...All that I was most anxious to avoid in the conduct of the late war and negotiations has now been brought about by the hand of fate."

The game had to be started all over again. General Roberts marched once again on Kabul through the Kurram valley, inflicting punishment on the rebels. Sir Donald Stewart occupied Kandahar again; and to give the proof of his loyalty, Yakub joined the invading army before Kabul was occupied, and abdicating his throne sought British protection saying he would better be a grass-cutter in the British camp than be the Amir of Afghanistan. An enquiry in his conduct disproved that he had any complicity in the crime perpetrated against the Resident; though it proved conclusively also that he was "culpably indifferent" He was made a state prisoner and removed to India.

Now there was none in Afghanistan to negotiate peace with. The ferocious Afghans rose in arms all round. Roberts was forced to vacate Kabul and Bala Hissar and fall back on Sherpur where 10,000 tribesmen besieged the British who were relieved by Stewart from Kandahar only in the spring of 1880. Now from here to conquer the whole of the country should have required immense resources in men and money. And it was realised that the game was after all not worth the candle. A search for a new successor to the Kabul

1. See *Cambridge History of India*, VI, pp. 419-431.

2. Quoted by Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, p. 171.

throne started. A person was required who could rule the sturdy and fanatic Afghans, but still be a tool in the British hands. None was found to be possessing both these qualities, and Lytton therefore decided to disintegrate the country. Negotiations were started with Persia for her occupation of Herat; and Wali Sher Ali Khan, a representative of the old Sadozai House, was recognised as the ruler of Kandahar.

The problem however was still not solved. A man was required to rule Kabul and the north-western Afghanistan, though it did not matter as much as before whether he was a strong man. Luckily, just at this time Abdur Rehman, son of Afzal Khan and nephew of Sher Ali who had ruled Afghanistan as Amir for 17 months during 1866-67 and was now under the protection of Russia, obtained his leave from that country, and helped by a small escort of Russian armed men entered Afghanistan to try his luck. Abdur Rehman was an able man of his grandfather Dost Muhammad's stamina, and when Lytton learnt of his arrival, he immediately felt that the right man had come. Abdur Rehman was like "a ram caught in the thicket", as Lytton wrote.<sup>1</sup> To take up the cause of a man coming the way he had done with the Russian help, was a risky job, and "the greatest leap in the dark on record"; yet Lytton felt a sort of instinctive confidence, the correctness of which was justified by future events.

Abdur Rehman accepted the British help, but being a wise statesman, he remembered the history of those Amirs who had tried to rule the Afghans with the help of a foreign power. He therefore proceeded cautiously. He writes in his memoirs: "I was unable to show my friendship publicly to the extent that was necessary because my people were ignorant and fanatical. If I showed any inclination towards the English, my people would call me an infidel for joining hands with infidels."<sup>2</sup> And little wonder, therefore, he was a grand success. But before all that could happen, Lytton resigned his office and left India. "Though he put a bold face on things, the Forward Policy and the general situation in Afghanistan had already blown up in his face. His cherished dream was now reduced to ashes. The costs of even a temporary occupation of Afghanistan were spiralling fantastically, and, like Lord Auckland thirty-six years earlier, he longed for an excuse to get out of place."<sup>3</sup>

To complete the story, the radical speakers, critical of Lytton's policy, succeeded at home. A severe defeat inflicted upon the

1. See Lady Betty Balfour, *Personal and Literary Letters of Earl of Lytton*, II, p. 202.
2. Mir Munshi Sultan Mohammed Khan (ed.) *The life of Abdur Rehman, Amir of Afghanistan*, (2 vols.) II, p. 117.
3. Swinson, Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

Conservative Government in the general elections in April 1880, and Lord Beaconsfield was replaced by Gladstone once again as the Prime Minister; Lord Cranbrook, the successor of Salisbury, was replaced by Lord Hartington as the Secretary of State for India. Lord Hartington's views which were severely critical of Lord Lytton were already well known, and therefore the latter had immediately to submit his resignation, though not called upon to do so. The Liberal Government proposed to return to the old frontiers in relation to Afghanistan, and the British evacuation of the Afghan districts of Sibi and Pishin was accordingly promised in the Queen's speech. Lord Ripon was appointed as the Viceroy to India, to carry the new policy through.

The Afghan policy of the new Cabinet was further explained by Lord Hartington in his dispatches of May and November 1880. He said : "It appears that as the result of two successful campaigns, of the employment of an enormous force, and of the expenditure of large sums of money, all that has been accomplished has been the disintegration of the state which it was desired to see strong, friendly and independent, the assumption of fresh and unwelcome liabilities in regard to one of the provinces and a condition of anarchy throughout the remainder of the country." The new British aim in Afghanistan therefore was to return to the state of affairs as they were before the war.

Ripon's policy in India therefore was to blast Lytton's reputation. But on resuming the negotiations with Abdur Rehman he felt the real distance to which the things had gone, and therefore with all the declared principles of the new policy by the Home Government as well as by himself, he could reach only where Lytton himself had aimed at. By the new agreement with Abdur Rehman, the districts of Pishin and Sibi were retained by the British, the new Amir bound himself to have his relations with no foreign power except the British, and in return for this the British agreed to give him an annual subsidy, and an aid in men, money and arms in case of an unprovoked foreign aggression. The more important point of this agreement was that the British would have no Resident in any part of Afghanistan.

Ripon desired to do away with Lytton's arrangement in Kandahar and western Afghanistan; but he could not do so immediately unless he chose to violate the treaty Lytton signed with the Kandahar ruler. Soon, however, the circumstances in Afghanistan took a sharp turn. Ayub Khan, another son of Sher Ali, who had been in the occupation of Herat, marched from that place to Kandahar to avenge the insult and death of his father and to recover power for himself. General Burrows tried to resist his march at Maiwand, but was utterly routed yielding to Ayub Khan one of the greatest victories that English had ever done to an Oriental power. The victorious

army of Ayub marched on to Kandahar where Roberts was despatched by Stewart from Kabul at the head of 10,000 soldiers. Roberts completed his 313 miles march wonderfully in twenty days, and in the battle of Kandahar inflicted a complete defeat upon Ayub, thereafter remaining at Kandahar till 1881, till it was decided to evacuate. In the meanwhile Stewart also withdrew from Kabul on the fixed date as previously agreed upon. Sher Ali Khan, the ruler of Kandahar, was prevailed upon to abdicate, though against the agreement the British had signed with him. Kabul and Kandahar thus reunited under Abdur Rehman, and the British won thereby his complete loyalty.

But hardly had the British forces evacuated Afghanistan when Ayub Khan marched once again from Herat and occupied Kandahar. For several months the state of affairs continued as such, and British grew anxious regarding the future of Abdur Rehman at Kabul itself. Soon in September 1881, Abdur Rehman marched out on Kandahar, and to the utter relief and satisfaction of the British, he won a complete victory over Ayub in a battle near that town. Ayub fled to Persia, and Herat also fell under Abdur Rehman's control. And his settlement brought to a close the most dangerous phase of the Central Asian question.

#### A Review of Lytton's Afghan Policy

H.H. Dodwell has tried to support Lytton's policy in Afghanistan. Lytton, according to him, "had inherited a position of extreme difficulty." Argyll's decision of 1873 had convinced Sher Ali that he could not hope for any help from the British, nor need he fear them in any way. Lytton had to disabuse the Amir of this error, and writes Dodwell, "Probably Lytton was right in thinking that nothing short of a war would do so." Stoletoff's embassy had imperatively demanded submission or destruction of Sher Ali, and therefore "In any case war was made inevitable by the Russian action in the crisis of 1878." "Nor does the second Afghan War," continues the writer, "afford a parallel with the first except in superficial aspects." Though both illustrated the case with which the country could be occupied, and the difficulty with which it could be kept; the main points of difference between the two wars were, as the writer goes on, that whereas the first war ended with the restoration of a ruler whom the British had dethroned, the second replaced a hostile with a friendly ruler; the second war brought to an end the disastrous policy of Lord Lawrence and Argyll; and it gave to India, for the first time since the collapse of the Mughal Empire, a position with which the north-western frontier could be easily defended.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Majumdar theorises that the second Afghan war was a result

1. *Cambridge History of India*, VI, pp. 419-431.

of the fear of the Russian invasion through Afghanistan. Whether the Russian menace was real, may be seriously doubted. "There is, however, no doubt that Russians, with a friendly Afghanistan, could bring sufficient pressure on the British, and could not only keep them engaged in the critical time of a European war, but might even use their position as a lever for extorting concession from the British in Europe."<sup>1</sup>

Viewed dispassionately, however, the above arguments do not stand the test of reason. Both the authorities agree that the real trouble was started as a result of Russia sending the mission and signing a treaty with Afghanistan. But both seem to overlook the fact that Sher Ali made every effort to resist the mission and the treaty was imposed upon him by Russia. Sher Ali actually understood the Russian character, and he knew that in case of trouble with the British that country would not afford any assistance to him, as it really happened. It was only reluctantly that Sher Ali agreed to all this. And therefore under these circumstances the best British approach to the subject should have been the effort of the British ambassador at St. Petersburg to demand the recall of the Russian mission in Afghanistan. That in case this had been done Russia should definitely have obliged, may be proved from the fact that the moment the British mission started its march into Afghanistan the Russian mission was actually recalled.

Moreover, the British did not gain much in Afghanistan which they could not have gained without a war. Actually before the war commenced Sher Ali's letter had been received by Lytton in which he agreed to all the British demands. The war instead of adding to the British advantages, rather whittled them down, and now the British did after all agree after a very costly experience of the second war, that the presence of a British Resident in Afghanistan was not necessary.

Then Dodwell's points of difference between the two wars too are only of little significance. If after the withdrawal of the Russian mission the British should have desisted from war, Sher Ali could be made as friendly towards the British as Abdur Rehman proved to be. If Lord Lawrence's policy was changed in Afghanistan, it was done only to a disastrous consequence. The advantage gained in the north-west frontier was not worthy of war, and much of it could be gained even without it since Sher Ali agreed ultimately to the British demands.

Beaconsfield perhaps correctly wrote to Salisbury that Lytton's policy "is perfectly fitted to a state of affairs in which Russia was our assailant; but Russia is not our assailant." In fact Sir Stafford

1. Majumdar, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 584.



Northcote, Lord Cairns, Cross and Lord Salisbury were all opposed to Lytton's policy. The Viceroy was "forcing the hand of the Government," Beaconsfield commented, "and had been doing so from the first, he thought only of India and was dictating, by its means, the foreign policy of the Government in Europe and Turkey. He had twice disobeyed the orders...and...unless curbed, he would bring about some terrible disaster."

Gladstone was in fact correct when he asserted in the Parliament : "We made war in error upon Afghanistan in 1838. To err is human and pardonable. But we have erred a second time on the same grounds and with no better justification....It is proverbially said that history repeats itself, and there has rarely been an occasion in which there has been a nearer approach to identity than in the case of the present and the former wars."<sup>1</sup>

### HIS FRONTIER POLICY IN DARDISTAN

When Lytton arrived in India inspired by the "forward theory" of his Conservative bosses in England, he contemptuously declared : "We inherit a huge capital of blunders which has been accumulating at compound interest." And asserted with confidence : "I hope that by the end of the year I may have something to show in the shape of a definite frontier policy.."<sup>2</sup>

The frontier policy of Lytton, besides his aggressive attitude towards Afghanistan, consisted of obtaining a commanding position in Dardistan which he thought could best be had by appointing a British Agent at Gilgit. Kashmir had its importance, being the meeting place of the three great empires of Russia, China and the British. In the north-west of the valley is Dardistan which consisted of the petty principalities of Hunza, Nagar, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Bajaur, Darel, Tangir and Chilas, and over which a close influence could be exercised from Gilgit, a 'nucleus' or 'hub', which had been occupied by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846.

Dardistan acquired an additional importance after the Russian march into Central Asia; and of the British unilateral declaration of the northern borders of Afghanistan in the time of Lord Mayo. This declaration was an unwritten Anglo-Russian agreement of 1873 under which the river Oxus was to be the limit of the Afghan territories. Beyond the Oxus, the Russian sphere of influence was recognised, but Russia made no distinction between a sphere of influence and occupation<sup>3</sup>, and after the 1873 agreement-therefore,

1. See Mallet, Bernard, *Thomas George Earl of Northbrook* ; Mir Munshi Sultan Mohd. Khan, *The Life of Abdul Rehman* ; Lady Betty, *op. cit.*, for further details.
2. Gopal, S., *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, p. 78.
3. See Chapters on Lord Mayo.



taking her support from it, she conquered one territory after another till her sphere of influence became an empire. As Russia was marching ahead, the British sent a commercial mission to Yarkand under Douglas Forsyth to develop a two-cushion cordon round the British territories. Forsyth, during his second mission of 1873-74, suddenly discovered two passes in the great mountain range that separated the Chitral and Yassin tribal states from the Oxus valley. These passes were the Ishkoman Pass through which Russia could march her troops into Yassin and then on to the Punjab via Gilgit, Chilas and Torbela; and the other the Baroghil Pass to Chitral threatening Peshawar or Jallalabad.

These discoveries caused a stir in the Government circles. Lytton condemned the attitude of those who showed an indifference towards the Russian advance as "dictated by the heart of a hen to the head of a pin,"<sup>1</sup> and was sure that "should the Russian power, resting along the northern frontier of Kashmir overflow the mountain range...the moral effect of such a position would be as injurious to the tranquillity of our power as if Russia were at Meru."<sup>2</sup> The guarantee against such dangerous possibilities, Lytton thought, lay only in controlling Dardistan, the "broad belt of independent barbarism" that lay between the newly discovered passes and the British frontier.

For a time there was a proposal that Dardistan could be jointly subjugated by a tripartite agreement of the British, Afghan and Kashmir. If Afghanistan exhibited a helpful attitude, she could even be allowed to absorb Chitral. But soon Lytton discovered that Afghanistan was not in a mood to follow the British line of thought, and therefore, some alternative means to control the situation would have to be adopted.

If Afghanistan could not be made to toe the British line, at least Kashmir was not beyond the British power to convert. It was therefore decided that, the direct British occupation of Dardistan being difficult as well as costly, the Maharaja should be allowed to extend his political hold over it, preferably through peaceful negotiations, but if need be, through British military help. In return for this, the British may obtain a permanent Resident in Kashmir, and an Agent at Gilgit to keep an eye on the situation.

On 17 and 18 November 1876, therefore, Lytton met Ma Ranbir Singh of Kashmir at Madhopur and made his proposal. Maharaja was only too willing to extend his political hold on Dardistan with the British help, but an Agent at Gilgit was not an easy

1. Gopal, S., p. 80.

2. Alder, G.J., *British India's Northern Frontier*, p. 114.

pill to swallow. Lytton, however, was adamant, and the Maharaja ultimately bowed, on certain conditions such as that the Agent would not interfere in the trade or administration, would confine himself only to reporting on the tribal states and beyond, etc. Towards the end of 1877 Biddulph, being appointed the Agent, proceeded to Gilgit. The task assigned to him was. "to furnish reliable intelligence of the progress of events beyond the Kashmir frontier.... and...in consultation with the Kashmir authorities, to cultivate friendly relations with the tribes beyond the border in view to bringing them gradually under the control and influence of Kashmir."<sup>1</sup>

The tribal states of Dardistan were afraid of the aggressive Afghan designs, and often approached the British for help. The British and the Maharaja took advantage of this fact, and while Lord Lytton warned the Amir of Afghanistan more than once against his designs on the tribal territories on the one hand, on the other hand the States like Chitral were persuaded to enter into a close alliance with Kashmir. Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral, thus, entered into an agreement with Kashmir recognising the Maharaja's suzerainty, agreeing to exchange representatives with him and in return to get a fixed annual subsidy. But such agreements were of little value before religious affiliations that obtained between these States and Afghanistan. The tribal leaders showed an open and loud contempt for the Maharaja and the British, and Aman-ul-Mulk was heard immediately after the agreement to say about the subsidy promised by the Maharaja, that "I can take a few Kaffir women and sell them for as much." Nor could these chiefs in such circumstances be relied upon for their loyalty in the event of a Russian or Afghan march against the British. No wonder, the policy of developing the Kashmir political influence in these states had not been put into effect when suspicions with regard to its efficacy began to appear.

Lytton, however, remained determined not to allow Dardistan to remain free, and this despite the fact that the later surveys of the passes showed that they were after all not that easy for a foreign invader to negotiate as they were supposed to be. Lytton in the meanwhile, was also disillusioned with the Maharaja, and now started looking for some alternative route by which the passes under reference could be controlled. Such a route, which was much shorter from India to the passes, than the one via Gilgit, was actually discovered. This was the one that ran north from Peshawar via Swat, Dir, Chitral to the Upper Oxus valley, and was more direct than those cutting across Ladakh to the east, or the one by Jallalabad and Kunduz to the west.<sup>2</sup> Rahmatullah Khan of Dir had differences with his neighbouring chiefs, and was also afraid of the Kabul designs against his territories. He appealed to the British for help.

1. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 119.

2. *ibid.*, p. 184.

The idea struck Lord Lytton that Dir could be made a centre of the British influence, and through that state the other tribal territories could be kept under the British political influence. Negotiations were soon started with Rahmatullah Khan, but it was not long after that it was discovered that this chief also could be relied upon to serve the British interests only as much as the Maharaja of Kashmir, and Lytton remarked in disgust: "The chiefs of these states will come to us whenever we want them. We have only to beckon them off the rank, like cabmen; and it is inadvisable to have too many greedy ruffians on our hands at once."<sup>1</sup>

The determination to guard the passes, however, still did not leave the conservative Viceroy. When his policy of keeping a strong united Afghanistan under the British influence broke up, and it was decided to dismember it, the versatile poet-Viceroy developed yet another brilliant idea: that instead of placing the British agency for relations with the Dardistan states at Gilgit, it could better be shifted to Jallalabad. But soon after Abdur Rehman, the 'ram caught in the thicket', appeared and wrecked this scheme as well.

The two alternative schemes thus could never get off the drawing board. But the creaks and crevices that had appeared in the Madhopur scheme also in the meanwhile grew sharp. There was fresh evidence of the Kashmir contacts with Russia. "The ally whose influence a British Agent at Gilgit was supposed to spread as a bulwark against Russia and Afghanistan, was found to have been in secret correspondence with both."<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja had been averse to the appointment of the Gilgit Agent right from the start, therefore, after the Agent took office, a denial of cooperation and of cordial dealing with him was nothing but natural. Nor was the choice of Biddulph as Agent at Gilgit, and of Henvey as the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, a happy choice. Both lacked maturity of judgement, often flirted with the most impracticable and dangerous schemes, and had no cordiality between them. Then there was the difficulty of the 230 miles rough track from Srinagar to Gilgit, which for six months in a year, was blocked up by snow and cut across torrents and passes which were not always easy to negotiate.

One difficulty appeared after another, till there was a catastrophe, and the whole basket of theories which Lytton had brought from England to establish a 'scientific frontier' scattered before the wind of impracticability. There was a strategic fort of Chaprot which Nagar conquered from Hunza, but finding himself unable to retain it, invited the Maharaja to occupy it. Nothing could be more agreeable to both the British and the Maharaja, the Kashmir troops promptly took possession of the fort and felt pride in having developed

1. Quoted, *ibid*, p. 126.

2. Alder, p. 130.

a stronghold in the very midst of the territories they wanted effectively to keep under their political control. But the prize proved too costly. Soon Hunza aroused the religious feelings of the tribal people against the infidels, and taking help of the states like Yassin declared a holy war. The Kashmir troops supported by the British defended the fort, and got an ultimate success.<sup>1</sup> But before calm was restored, Lytton had learnt yet another lesson of his life. Like Afghanistan, it may be easy to conquer the Dardistan states, or occupy strategic posts in their midst, but it was utterly difficult to keep them.

"Amid a tangle of 'mountain tops higher than Mount Blanc' and far from the reservoir of British military strength, British influence at Gilgit was just not strong enough, either to impress Chiefs like Aman-ul-Mulk, or to control the dubious activities of the Kashmir officials."<sup>2</sup> In June 1880 the Indian Foreign Secretary admitted: "Should difficulties arise, it would be embarrassing, if not impossible, for the Government of India to render any material assistance to the Maharaja or to Major Biddulph in regard to the protection and tranquillity of this remote frontier."<sup>3</sup>

The whole game of the Gilgit agency was futile. Lytton's policy towards Dardistan, as that towards Afghanistan, proved yet another conservative adventure, which ended in a blow to the British prestige which was aimed to be strengthened. Complete futility of the Gilgit Agency was realised and the withdrawal of it was a foregone conclusion. Ripon recalled the Agent, though the Maharaja of Kashmir was told that it was only a temporary measure; for the British did not want to renounce the right which after so much bitterness and bad feeling between themselves and the Maharaja, they had secured.

An attempt to draw a character estimate of Lytton may not be too often made but for the fact that his internal policy displayed a greater wisdom in certain respects than his external relations. Lord Curzon wrote of him: "A study of the papers, however, both as published at the time and later on in official records in India, led me to admire the extraordinary ability and resourcefulness with which Lord Lytton conducted his case on paper, and the perfection of the English prose in which his Minutes and Despatches were clothed."<sup>4</sup>

1. See Kapur, M.L., *Kashmir Sold and Snatched*, pp. 88-95.

2. Alder, p. 133. *op. cit.*,

3. Quoted, *ibid.*

4. Curzon, *British Government in India* II, p. 255.

While his steps towards financial decentralisation, adjustment of salt tax and opposition to lenient sentences to Europeans would earn him the appreciation of an Indian nationalist, his abolition of the five per cent *ad valorem* import duty on coarser kinds of cotton cloth certainly exhibited his partisan attitude in favour of the Lancashire industrialists. It is, however, his Afghan policy and the Frontier policy which completely exposed his shallowness as a statesman; and his discriminatory attitude towards the vernacular press showed up the limited vision he possessed as an administrator. In certain respects such as his proposals for a gold standard for India, for the creation of a separate North-West Frontier Province directly under the control of the Central Government, and for the establishment of a Privy Council of the Indian Princes, he was indeed ahead of his times, and they prove that Lytton was fitted more to be a man of peace than of war. In war strategy and external diplomacy, his approach was just commonplace and proved that he lacked the far-sightedness of a man like Lawrence.

Lytton left India in 1880, and took no interest in public affairs in England till he was appointed Ambassador to France in 1887. He was steeped in French learning and French lore, and this post suited him admirably well. His literary tastes and artistic visions soon filled the Embassy with poets and men of arts, and earned him a great popularity among the French people. It was there that he died on 24 November 1891.

## Marquess of Ripon 1880-84

Ripon was born on 24 October 1827 to Frederick Robinson (who later became Earl of Ripon) and Lady Sarah Hobart, daughter of the 4th Earl of Buckinghamshire. He was the second, but the only surviving son of his father, his childhood name being George Frederick Samuel Robinson. George did not attend any school or college, for his family was rich enough to get him all education privately at home. He married his cousin Henrietta Anne Theodosia in 1849, was elected M.P. in 1852 succeeded his father as Earl of Ripon in 1859, and occupied several positions like Under-Secretary for War and Secretary of State for India, till Gladstone appointed him the Viceroy of India in 1880. "The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon lasted for only four years," wrote Lord Curzon, "and if its termination was viewed without regret by the British community, it excited the fervid and overwhelming demonstrations from Indians of all classes, who have ever since canonised him as the real author of that advance towards self-government and nationhood which has in recent times progressed at such a dizzy rate of speed."<sup>1</sup> Lord Ripon in fact was a liberal reformer, and in his attitude and beliefs resembled Lord Bentinck. His steps towards local self-government, his financial decentralisation, his education policy and his administrative reforms, will ever mark his period as an important milestone in the history of Modern India. We may make a brief study of all these departments of his activities.

### LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

"What I want", wrote Lord Ripon, "is the gradual training of the best, most intelligent and influential men in the community to take an interest and active part in the management of their local affairs." And he took steps to fulfil this desire.

1. Curzon, *British Government in India*, II, p. 258.

### **Resolution of 1881**

The first resolution of Lord Ripon's Government was passed in this connection in 1881, in which it was declared that the time had now come to take steps to develop further Lord Mayo's idea of Local Self-Government. The resolution asked the Centre to give due consideration to the subject in consultation with the provincial governments. The provincial governments were to be directed to make a careful study of the provincial and local Municipal Acts in order to enable them to decide upon the revenue sources that could be transferred from the provincial to the local municipal management. The study was also to be aimed at deciding upon the administrative subjects which could be so transferred as to satisfy the understanding and aspirations of the local people.

The Central Government working on the resolution, therefore, issued letters to the provincial governments incorporating the above directions, and also giving hints regarding the items of expenditure that could be transferred. The provincial governments were told that "it would be hopeless to expect any real development of self-government if the local boards were subject to check or interference in matters of detail," and the Governor-General's anxiousness to transfer best of the activities to the local bodies was clearly expressed.

### **Resolution of 1882**

The next resolution which has been of a very great importance in the history of local self-government was passed in 1882. And the system of rural boards that existed all over the country till independence was mainly the result of this resolution, which was "worked out and applied in various ways by the different provincial governments in India."<sup>1</sup>

The Resolution was passed, as Ripon himself declared, "not primarily with a view to improvement in administration...It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education." And therefore even if administration under it deteriorated, it was to be tolerated. Nor was it proper, he further said, to assume that the people were indifferent towards the local boards. So far no proper effort had been made effectively to associate the people with the governmental activities.

The reforms introduced by the Resolution were that the mere consultative committees so far established to advise and assist the district officers were abolished. And directions were given to set up rural boards, with small areas as units of territories to be administered

1. Lindsay, J.H., *Cambridge History of India*, vi, p. 516.

by each, with the proviso that common matters were to be decided at periodical district councils to which each local board would send delegates. Alternatively it was suggested that district boards be set up with controlling power over the local boards. And it was this latter proposal that was in the majority of cases accepted.

The area of jurisdiction for each board was to be so small as to admit of both local knowledge and interest. In these boards the non-official element was to be in a large majority; the official not exceeding one-third of the total. The system of the elections was to be introduced wherever possible, and the non-official members were to hold office for not more than two years. The government control over these boards was to be exercised not from within, but from without. Or in other words, the government was only to revise and check the acts of these local bodies, not to dictate them. For the legislation of certain types of Acts of these local bodies the sanction of the government was to be necessary; the number of such cases to be large in the beginning, but to be reduced later on. In the case of a crisis, or continuous neglect of duties, a local government could set aside entirely or suspend temporarily the proceedings of a local board. But for the purpose of absolute suppression, the consent of the Government of India was necessary.

"It should be the general function of the executive officers of government to watch, especially at the outset, the proceedings of the local boards, to point out to them matters calling for their consideration, to draw their attention to any neglect duty on their part, and to check by official remonstrance any attempt to exceed their proper functions or to act illegally or in any arbitrary or unreasonable manner."

The Indians were to be encouraged to become members of these local bodies, and the Government was to help them in the performance of their duties. In order to attract responsible men, courtesy titles such as Rai and Rai Bahadur could be affixed to their names. And further the Resolution said, wherever possible, a non-official chairman should be preferred to an official one.

The Resolution of 1882 was a great landmark in the history of Local Self-Government, and Lord Ripon has been truly known as the "Father of Local Self-Government" in India. The Resolution laid down definitely the lines on which these institutions were to develop, provisions were made for the Indians to train themselves in democracy and political knowledge, and created greater facilities for the development of the local public utility works.

Still, as Lindsay writes, the best hopes "were hardly justified by the actual working of the various systems of local government which



they had inspired.'<sup>1</sup> The Indians were not yet prepared for such institutions, or perhaps they worked in such a manner as inspired no popular enthusiasm for elections. The local boards developed no popularity amongst the people, with the result that their work instead of being spontaneous, was inspired only by official energy and direction. And further, most of their members being illiterate, they did not or could not ascertain 'popular will outside their unit, and hence for the works in which the outside coordination within the district was necessary, they were bound to be guided only by the coordinating official authority at the district headquarters, with the result that strong powers were still retained by this authority. These bodies had no adequate funds at their disposal, nor did they make their own efforts to raise income. A quarter part of their income came from the local cesses which were realised by government officials, while the rest of it came from other sources at their disposal such as the tolls, public ferries and cattle-ponds. The income from these latter sources could be increased by their own efforts, but no such efforts were made. Nor did the chairmanship of these boards actually fall in the hands of the Indians. Naturally enough, therefore, within a short time these institutions became quite useless and it looked as if the whole purpose of Lord Ripon's reform had been defeated.

Yet, the lines laid down for the development of these institutions were important. The value of these institutions was not as much administrative as educative, which required constant and honest efforts of the officials, and as much of these efforts were forthcoming, so much progress was made, while a promising future was placed before them.

### District Towns

The development of the spirit of local self-government in the district towns constitutes another important aspect of Ripon's Resolution, in which the lines followed resembled those of the Rural Boards. A brief history upto 1882 may not be out of place. In the Mughal times, wherever municipal administration existed, it had been under the control of a *kotwal* who performed both the duties of a police officer and of a magistrate. With the British rule, however, as the local committees were formed to assist the magistrates, the leading local householders, landlords and merchants were associated through them with the local administrative activities. Such was the beginning of the Municipal Committees at the district towns, old commercial centres and large villages, which however, had no legal sanction so far.

Taking up the development of these Municipal Committees up to the time of Lord Ripon for individual provinces, we may first deal

1. *ibid.*, p. 521.

with Punjab. Here after the annexation in 1849, the government continued the old tax on all the goods coming into a town for the purposes of the improvement of the town and maintenance of its police. For the former purpose Municipal Committees constituted of the members drawn from different communities were called upon to assist. These Committees worked differently suiting themselves with the small and big towns as they were. The spirit displayed for the work was creditworthy, and elaborate projects for the improvement of the existing drainage system, particularly in the towns of Amritsar, Lahore and Ambala, were undertaken, the cost of which, according to the Punjab Administration Report of 1855-56, was "chiefly defrayed in the most spirited manner by the citizens." In 1850 the General Municipal Act XXVI was passed for the improvement of the working of these Committees and for the establishment of new ones, but few places benefited from it, till in 1867 the Act XV was passed by the Punjab which reserving wide powers for the Lieutenant-Governor, legalised the local committees and empowered them to choose their own forms of taxation, the proceeds from which were to be used firstly for the police administration of the town, and secondly for the general improvement works. The legislation in the north-west provinces (U.P.) followed the same lines as in the Punjab.

The Act XXVI of 1850 had empowered the establishment of a local committee for the taxation and improvement works in a town, wherever at least half a dozen of the inhabitants of the town petitioned for it. A great use of this Act was made in Bombay where at many places district officers made half a dozen of the people to petition, and established the committees. By its Act VI of 1873 Bombay brought its legislation in line with other provinces and classified a city as the one having a population of not less than 10,000 inhabitants, and a town as having not less than 2,000. In the City Boards non-official element was introduced, though no elected member was brought in. The town municipalities continued in the control of district officers working as their presidents.

The people of Madras actually resisted the Act XXVI of 1850, and few petitioned for committees. The purpose had therefore to be served only with voluntary associations, which too could be organised only at a few places. Dissatisfied, the Madras government passed the Act X of 1865 whereby to raise funds in the country towns for police administration, and where required, for improvement works; the government itself being the judge of the amount to be raised. By another Act passed in 1869, Municipal Committees were introduced in 42 towns, though in majority of the cases the measure was resisted or indifference shown because of the people's suspicion of the British purpose.

In Bengal, Act III of 1864 was passed which governed only the large towns ; while in 1868 Act VI was passed to deal with smaller

**Composition of Municipal Boards, 1885<sup>1</sup>**

	Total number of municipi- palities	Percentage of elected members	Boards wholly or partly elected	Wholly nominated boards	Chairmen Official	Non- Official
Bengal	147	50.4%	118	29	130 (?)	17 (?)
Bombay	162	10.8%	40	122	152	10
Madras	54	24.6%	33	11	26	21
N.W.P.	109	79.8%	101	8	103	6
Punjab	197	42.6%	122	75*	120 (?)	77 (?)
C. P.	58	60.2%	58	—	18 (?)	40 (?)
Burma	13	45.8%	8	5	13	—

\*Includes all Frontier municipalities.

places. Taxes were raised for police, conservancy, etc. But in both the cases the control continued entirely with the magistrates, the committees on which non-officials were nominated working only as consultative bodies.

In C.P. and Oudh, the Punjab Act XV of 1867 was worked upon in several towns. Nagpur worked without legislation, while Lucknow after 1857 followed the Act XXVI of 1850, its work being legalised by the Act XVIII of 1864.

On the whole, therefore, we may say that the municipal spirit of the people as well as the government authorities worked differently in different parts of the country. But nowhere was so far the elective element introduced, nor a system of local responsibility started. They all worked on the principle of "an oligarchy upon a superior power which may control its action to almost any conceivable extent," as Lord Hobart, the Governor of Madras remarked in 1874.

Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882, as referred to above, constituted a landmark in the history of Municipal Committees. The resolution directed the local bodies to be controlled by the government from without, and not from within; it recommended extension of the election system, and appointment of elected chairman; and finally it laid down that the Municipalities should be relieved of police charges, making them liable only for the charges pertaining to the subjects such as education, public health, etc. And now all the provinces passed Acts, making election compulsory for  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the members of the Municipal Committees. And the chairman also began to be elected.

1 From Tinker, Hugh, *Foundations of Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma* (Bombay, 1967), p. 48.

Still, as in the case of the Rural Boards, here too very little enthusiasm was shown by the people in elections. The Municipal Committees elected their chairmen in majority of the cases, but majority of these chairmen again, were the district officers themselves elected by the members, which showed a clear indolence on the part of the committees. Where non-official chairmen were elected, there again much depended only upon official inspiration and help.

Ripon's Local Self-Government measures were not supported by the Conservative opinion in England, which saw in them an ultimate danger to the British rule. Ripon himself was cautious, and did not want to go too far, as he declared : "We shall not subvert the British Empire by allowing the Bengali *Baboo* to discuss his own schools and drains. Rather shall we afford him a safety valve if we can turn his attention to these innocuous subjects."<sup>1</sup> But he did not like the opposition of the India Council, and remarked: "What is the use of a Liberal Government, so far as India is concerned, if it is to give itself up bound hand and foot to the guidance of a set of old gentlemen," whose energies are relaxed by old age, and who, having excellent salaries, and no responsibility, amuse themselves by criticising the proposals and obstructing the plans of those who have the more recent knowledge of the real state of India, and who have on their shoulders the whole responsibility for the good government of that country."<sup>2</sup>

### FINANCIAL DECENTRALISATION

Another great reform of Ripon was his Resolution of 1882 which is a landmark in the history of financial decentralisation. Assisted by his Finance Member Major Baring, he passed this Resolution which divided the sources of revenue under three heads : (1) Imperial, such as Salt, Customs, Opium which were to remain in the control of the Centre; (2) Provincial, such as Civil Departments, Public Works, the control of which was to be transferred to the local governments; and (3) the Divided Heads which consisted of the majority of the subjects such as Stamps, Forests, Registration, etc., and on which the two would have a concurrent authority. Land Revenue was placed under the Divided Heads, and from this a fixed percentage of income was assigned to the provinces which made good their deficits. Under the new scheme, therefore, the system of fixed grants was dispensed with. The provinces bound themselves to come to the help of the Centre in times of emergency, such as war; the Centre however undertaking that such demands would be made only in "case of disaster so abnormal as to exhaust the Imperial reserves and resources."<sup>1</sup> The

1. Quoted, Gopal, S., *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*, p. 95.

2. Wolfe, Lucien, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, II, p. 53, by Kulkarni, V.B., *op. cit.*, p. 207.

3. Resolution (Finance) No. 3353, 30 Sept. 1881, paras 6-8.

Centre on the other hand bound itself to help the provinces in cases of famine and pestilence of *unprecedented nature*. Now it was no more necessary for the provinces to keep specific funds for famine; the Centre itself undertaking to contribute annually an amount of £ 15,000,000 towards it. The settlement was quinquennial, to be revised after five years in the light of the previous experience.

The Resolution was a great development in the field of financial devolution; its great advantage being, writes C.L. Anand, that "it gave the provincial governments a direct interest not only in the provincialised revenue, but also in the most important items of Imperial revenue raised within their own province."<sup>1</sup> The system of grants was discontinued, and the provinces were no more now to live on the Central doles. Another merit of the new arrangement was that most of the subjects which involved a serious risk to finances, were taken over by the Centre itself, as Lord Cromer said : "Of the four peculiar dangers to which the finances of India were exposed, viz , war, diminution of opium revenue, fall of exchange and famine, the first three had to be met by the Government of India and only the fourth was left to the local governments." But in the case of the fourth too, the Central help was not completely denied. By the new arrangements, the financial administration both of the Centre and of the provinces was now put on sound principles some of which form the basis of our financial system even in the present times. Much of the financial burden of the provinces was removed, and they could now enjoy a greater freedom with a confidence in their future. The new arrangement tended to give a stability to the country's financial administration.

There were still, however, certain defects in the system. The Centre's general control and superintendence again was not relaxed, nor did the Centre stop issuing occasional resolutions, laying down definite lines for the provincial administration of finances. The regular reports had yet to be sent to the Centre, and the Centre could interfere in the administrative details of the provinces to bring about a harmony between them. Besides the quinquennial revisions involved huge amount of bitterness and disappointment. Those provinces which utilised funds thriftily and saved money, had their savings taken away, while those who spent uneconomically got more. This naturally developed irresponsibility and investment on uneconomical and ill-conceived schemes. At every revision, there were conflicts and clashes; the provinces demanding more while the Centre permitting less. At every revision, wrote the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1897 : "The provincial sheep is summarily thrown on its back, close-clipped and shorn of its wool and turned out to shiver till its fleece grows again." B.K. Thakore also comments : "At the renewal of the quinquennial contracts on three successive occasions the supreme government seized for its own use a substantial portion of the

1. Anand, C.L., *History of Government of India*, p. 211.

increase in income which the provinces had created by careful administration. And special contributions were also exacted on more than one occasion during the period. The inevitable result was again to weaken the administrations and financial conscience of the provincial authorities."<sup>1</sup> Nor was the apportionment of revenue to the different provinces made on some logical and defined principles.

The system revived after every five years, continued to work till 1904, though during this period certain changes were made. In 1884, for instance, the minimum balance required to be kept by the provinces was fixed, and this gave considerable stability to the system.

For a couple of years after 1888, however, the system suffered a serious set-back. There were famines and pestilence, resulting in financial troubles which necessitated economy and avoidance of new outlay. Besides there was a fall in exchange leading to the same consequences. The Centre had delegated certain authorities to the provinces in 1877 on certain conditions. These conditions were systematised and further strengthened in 1892 and 1897.<sup>2</sup> By the Resolution of 17 March 1892 the right of the Centre to issue "instructions to local governments on general or particular matters effecting the transferred revenues and services" was asserted. There was in fact an increasing tendency to curb the local discretion.

This tendency, however, was accidental and temporary. The actual powers of the local governments were not decreased. "The only remarkable difference is in the manner in which the Government of India interpreted or used its powers. Provincial governments were constantly reminded of their position. Their legal subordination was emphasised."<sup>3</sup>

## EDUCATION

Another significant contribution of Lord Ripon was in the field of education. Education continued to progress even after the retirement of Sir Wood from his office in 1866, though the pace was very slow. In the field of female education certain steps were taken. The missionaries broke ground in this respect in Bombay, and continued their activities from 1823 to 1851 till the other communities such as the Hindu and Parsi merchants and Maratha chiefs were also involved in the upliftment of education. The Government of Bombay also started its efforts in 1871 to collect an efficient staff of teachers for the purpose. Similarly, in Madras too the beginning was made by

1. Thakore, B.K., *Indian Administration to the Dawn of Responsible Government*, p. 310.
2. Resolutions of 27 March 1877; No. 1148 of 17 March 1892 : and No. 353-A of 11 August 1897.
3. See Bisheshwar Prasad, *Origin of Provincial Autonomy*, p. 195.

missionaries, and others followed suit; and the same happened in southern India and northern India. Between 1866 and 1882 thus the subject was taken up more seriously. Yet, the progress was very slow; in 1882 only .85 per cent of the girls of school-going age being in the schools all over India. Split up, the figures were 1.59 per cent, the highest in Bombay; 1.50 per cent in Madras; .80 in Bengal; .72 in the Punjab and the lowest, only .28 in the North-West Provinces.

The Mahommedan education also received, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> certain special considerations at the hands of Lord Mayo in 1871. Soon certain Muslim philanthropists led by Maulvi (later Sir) Sayyad Ahmad Khan came into the field. Both Hindu and Muslim chiefs supported their efforts materially, and the successive Viceroys also doing so, these efforts bore fruit and in 1875 a High School for Muslims was opened at Aligarh, which became a second-grade College affiliated to the Calcutta University in 1878 despite a continuous opposition of the conservative element among the Muslims. The Mahommedan Anglo-Oriental College was also opened during this period, which though later on starting to admit the non-Muslims as well, made a considerable contribution towards the Muslim education. Both these institutions were placed under the management of European heads who later played a significant role in wooing the Muslims for the Government as against the progressive nationalistic thought in India.<sup>2</sup>

Besides, another significant development during this period was the movement towards the establishment of the Punjab University. An Anglo-Oriental College was opened, which ultimately in 1882 developed into the Punjab University. Yet another development was the handing over of the provincial departments of education by Mayo in 1871 to the provinces themselves, which were to be given a definite revenue assignment from the Centre for the purpose. The Centre, however, still kept in touch and gave additional grants at times. Secondary schools and colleges multiplied more rapidly, and by 1882 it was estimated that the public institutions had imparted education to as many as 2½ million students.

**Hunter Education Commission 1882 :** A landmark in the history of education in India is, however, the report of the Hunter Commission submitted in 1882. There were complaints that the Despatch of 1854 was not being properly followed. Therefore Lord Ripon appointed a Commission of 22 members with Sir William Hunter as its Chairman, to report on "the manner in which effect had been given to the principles of the Despatch of 1854, and of suggesting such measures as might seem desirable in order to further carry out

1. See chapters on Mayo.

2. See Lovett, Verney (Sir) *A History of Indian Nationalist Movement*.



the policy laid down therein." And further to report on "the present state of elementary education and the means by which this can everywhere be extended and improved." The progress of the college work and some other aspects of education were also to be reported upon, though general operation of universities was out of the Commission's terms of reference.

The Commission submitted its report after a thorough investigation into the matter. The important points of the report were : (1) Primary education was seriously lagging behind and that it should be strongly encouraged by reserving a part of the provincial revenues for the purpose by declaring it to be "that part of the system of public instruction which possesses an almost exclusive claim on provincial revenues." The Commission recommended that the elementary schools be handed over to the management of municipal and district boards and other local bodies subject to the inspection and supervisions by the government, and that the educational responsibilities of these boards be given a legislative definition. (2) Regarding Secondary education the Commission expressed its appreciation that it was making a good progress, particularly in Bengal where the system of the grants-in-aid had worked well, and where after every one State-maintained school there were two maintained by private agencies, and where there were but very few English middle schools maintained entirely by the State. It recommended that all Secondary schools should be progressively handed over to private enterprise which should be encouraged by grants-in-aid, and that in future the Secondary education be ordinarily provided by the Government only where private cooperation was not available. At the same time, however, the standard of education was not to be permitted to decline and for this purpose, though permitting maximum freedom, there was to be no slackening in the direct and efficient control. (3) It recommended that in alternative to the existing 'entrance' course, some such school courses should be introduced which should train the students for commercial as well as industrial purposes. (4) A recommendation was also made once again for the encouragement of the indigenous schools by grants-in-aid on the basis of 'Payment by Results.' (5) The aided schools and colleges should be allowed lower rates of fee than those charged by similar state-owned institutions, and that these colleges should be encouraged to have alternative courses, and to employ more and more Indian graduates trained in the European universities. (6) Special attention should be paid towards the development of education among the Mahommedans. (7) Due emphasis was laid on physical education which had so far been neglected, and regarding which now several suggestions were made. (8) certain important recommendations were made regarding the provision of scholarships, improvement of the grants-in-aid system and regarding the vocational education. (9) The Commission duly emphasised that though any sort of religious teaching was to be always excluded, some arrangement must be made to satisfy the



popular demand regarding the development of the sense of right and wrong among the students. For this, moral text-books could be prepared based upon "fundamental principles of natural religion," and secondly, in Government or an aided College the Principal or a Professor could deliver a series of lectures to each class "on the duties of a man and a citizen." This last recommendation raised an interesting controversy, and Sir Alfred Lyall, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, terming it a useless point said no two persons could agree as to what were the duties of a citizen. The local governments having criticised this recommendation it was rejected by the Government of India as well as by Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State.

The Hunter Commission constitutes an important stage in India's history of education. Majority of its recommendations were accepted, with the result that with the devolution of control to local bodies, the British element in the teaching as well as the inspecting agencies was considerably reduced, which had a good effect in Madras, though its effect elsewhere was mixed. Another significant improvement after 1882 was the development of the Punjab University which was founded in that year, thus lessening the burden of the Calcutta University from which it differed in having a faculty of Oriental learning and in its proficiency and high proficiency examinations in vernacular languages. A similar purpose in the North-West Provinces was sought to be served by introducing in the Queens College, Benaras, the facilities for instruction in the Sanskrit language, literature, etc. In 1886 the Public Service Commission divided the educational service into three categories—Imperial, Provincial and Subordinate. For the first of these, termed as the Indian Educational Service, recruitments were made in England, while for the rest this was done in India itself which further helped in the devolution of authority to the local governments and bodies.

The progress in the Primary schools from 1882 to 1901 was displayed by the number of students in them rising from 22 lakh in the former to 32 lakhs in the latter year. In the Secondary schools this number increased from 429,093 in 1886 to 633,728 in 1901; while that in colleges increased from 11,501 in 1886 to 23,009 in 1901. The expenditure both from the local boards and the government which was 132.82 lakhs in 1885, increased to 177.04 in 1901.

There were, however, certain defects which crept in and grew strong with the passage of time. Whatever development there was, was mainly in the purely literary education, while technical institutions did not develop much. The sort of education generally imparted, rather made the students unfit for their ancestral professions such as agriculture; the only educational gain being the production of increasing number of clerks, all of whom not getting jobs added to unemployment. And the literary education too, instead of

developing finer tastes, developed only a tendency towards the memorisation of text books. No provision could be made for moral education. Nor could a proper standard of efficiency be maintained in privately controlled institutions which became only vested interests and in them the lot of the teachers in connection with their conditions of service and payment deteriorated.

Another defect<sup>1</sup> was that there was no unity of aim with regard to education between different provinces. Nor did there exist a living contact between a university and its affiliated colleges; the former merely conducting examinations, and the latter a mere cluster of lecture rooms. The system of examinations was not fitted to judge the real aptitudes of students, there was a slavish tendency to imitate the English patterns, but the institutions provided a mere smattering of English with no proper understanding of its spirit. Nor was there a proper provision of boarding rooms and hostels with the colleges. The Primary education showed no good prospects. Nor was the university administration as good as desired. The Senate bodies with no experts among them, worked inefficiently. While the whole business of education was considered to be only an unimportant part of the business of the Home Department, "drifting about like a deserted hulk on chopping seas"

### ILBERT BILL

Lord Ripon also tried to introduce a long awaited and liberal reform in the judicial machinery of the country. The existing Criminal Procedures Code required that no Indian Sessions Judge or a Magistrate could try a European by birth, except in the Presidency towns. This privilege granted to the Europeans was an anachronism, "and seriously hampered the efficient and swift administration of justice." By this time a large number of Indians had entered the Covenanted Civil Services, and occupying positions of dignity and responsibility, had given a very good account of their abilities. They felt bitter at this discrimination which constantly reminded the British of their superiority, and wanted it to be removed.

To remove the discrepancy, under the directions of Lord Ripon, Ilbert the Law Member of the Government of India, prepared a Bill, the draft of which was approved by the Executive Council of the Governor-General and by almost all the Provincial Governments. And it was brought into the Imperial Legislative Council in February 1882. "The measure," as S.K. Ratcliffe wrote, "was essentially a small affair, designed to make an inconsiderable alteration in judicial procedure."<sup>2</sup> But the reaction that it brought from the European community in India was bitter, full of utter short-sightedness,

1. See Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India*, pp. 312-339.

2. Ratcliffe, S.K., *Sir William Wedderburn*, p. 55.

undignified and irresponsible. The Calcutta Town Hall resounded with protest meetings and indecent speeches. A cry against it was raised in the Bengal Presidency and elsewhere, in which the European indigo and tea planters played a prominent part. The subject of the European women-in-danger was made handy, and Meredith Townshend wrote in the *Spectator*: "Would you like to live in a country where at any moment your wife would be liable to be sentenced on a false charge of slapping an ayah to three day's imprisonment, the magistrate being a copper-coloured pagan who probably worships the Linga, and certainly exults any opportunity of showing that he can insult white persons with impunity?" To slight the Indians, a fake advertisement appeared in the *Englishman* of 29 March 1883: "Wanted Sweepers, Punkah Coolies and Bhisties for the residents of Saidpur. None but educated Bengalee Baboos who have passed the Entrance Examination need apply. Ex-Deputy Magistrates (Bengali) preferred."<sup>1</sup>

The Indian judges were called "ebony-coloured Babus". Ladies' committees and an Anglo-Indian and European Defence Association were formed. The boycott of the Government loans was proposed, and in the streets of Calcutta the planters from the mofussil openly insulted Lord Ripon when he returned from Simla. There was even a proposal to kidnap him when he proceeded to a shoot, but he escaped, and his son was taken instead.

Leaders of the public opinion in India, like Lal Mohan Ghosh, condemned the white opposition to this liberal reform. And in a crowded meeting in the Calcutta Town Hall, Ghosh described them as "one anna, half-anna Europeans who were neither fish nor flesh nor good redherring". The home authorities as well as Lord Ripon's Government remained firm in their view for a time. But as the agitation mounted, Ripon all of a sudden felt that in case of a European uprising in Calcutta the situation would grow serious. The "European Police Force at the disposal of the Bengal Government," he wrote, "was so very small (between 60 and 70 men all told). In any riot, the least serious, we would have had at once to call out the troops and I felt and feel still that to employ European soldiers against Europeans in this country would be a step of the gravest kind."

The Bill was therefore modified, giving the power of trying the European offenders to the Indian Sessions Judges and District Magistrates alone, and permitting a European the right to be tried by a jury in case he so desired. At least half the members of the jury in this case were to be European. In the case of a serious penalty, the committal to High Court was made obligatory.

1. Gopal, S., *British Policy in India*, p. 146.

The controversy over the Ilbert Bill had a far-reaching effect on the Indian mind. "It has been said by several authorities on contemporary India," writes Ratcliffe, "that the conflict over the Ilbert Bill taught the educated classes of India the possibilities of political agitation."<sup>1</sup> "They were accustomed to rulers who should be influenced by cajolery, and entreaty, bribery or threats of revolts, but it was an entirely new experience to see a Government deflected from its purpose by newspaper abuse and an exhibition of bad manners. In later days Indian nationalism was to acquire some of its techniques from the suffrage movement in England, and more from Irish Home Rulers, but it was the successful agitation against the Ilbert Bill which decided the general lines upon which the Indian politician was to run his campaigns. It is significant that the two years which followed this agitation saw the foundation of the Indian National Congress and the European Association."<sup>2</sup>

This controversy in fact aroused a strong nationalist spirit in this country, and cemented the Indian national opinion against the British rule. The Indians had the ability, but they had no power. This agitation which was a blow to the self-respect of every Indian, brought them together, and showed them the path by which power could be attained. Nor of less importance was the racial bitterness which the Indians developed as a whole against the Europeans. In fact, as Rawlinson writes, at "the end of Lord Ripon's viceroyalty, India was convulsed by an extraordinary outburst of racial feeling."<sup>3</sup>

Lord Ripon, however, gained his reputation in India, though he lost in this respect among his own countrymen. He "won, by his championship of their cause, the enthusiastic devotion and support of men of Indian birth."<sup>4</sup> And on "his resignation in 1884, the route was lined with acclaiming crowds and his name has ever since been enshrined in the hearts of the nationalist party in India as the greatest champion of their cause on the Viceregal throne."

### OTHER INTERNAL REFORMS

Among the other works of Lord Ripon were some of his Tariff and Revenue measures. As a result of the fiscal measures of Sir John Strachey, the financial circumstances by now had become quite favourable. The Indian budgets were surplus in place of being deficit and all these circumstances admitted of certain experiments in internal reform. Taking up the opportunity, therefore, Lord Ripon completed the Free Trade Policy commenced by Lord Northbrook, and removed in 1882 all the five per cent *ad valorem* import duties from

1. Ratcliffe *op. cit.*, p. 57.

2. Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 498.

3. Rawlinson, H.G., *The British Achievement in India*, p. 152.

4. Roberts, *History of British India*, p. 470.

tariff. On the five articles such as salt, spirits and wine alone now the dues were left, which were subject to internal excise. Arms and ammunitions kept for political reasons also remained in this category. The salt tax was also reduced all over India in 1882.

Ripon took keen interest in the condition of peasants, and left a Bengal Tenancy Bill to be passed by his successor. He reorganised the Department of Revenue and Agriculture set up by Lord Mayo. And under the findings of the Famine Commission, this department took in hand the famine relief, the reforms of revenue system, etc. The department was reorganised under the recommendations of the Famine Commission itself. He also proposed that in the districts once surveyed and assessed, the revenue should not be increased except on grounds of rise in prices. The suggestion was very sound, and it should have given a comparative permanency to the land revenue settlement. But unfortunately, the Secretary of State did not accept it.

Lord Ripon brought the Second Afghan war to a close, and repealed the hated Vernacular Press Act of Lytton. He wrote to Lord Hartington: "The fact is that the official in India regards the Press as an evil, necessary perhaps, but to be kept within as narrow limits as possible. He has no feeling for the benefits of free discussion."

When Sir Richard Garth, the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court went on leave, Lord Ripon appointed Sir Romesh Chandra as the acting Chief Justice. This action of Ripon too was bitterly criticised by the Europeans, but Ripon stuck to his guns. He also got the age-limit for the Indians for entrance into the Indian Civil Services raised to 21 years; though he failed in introducing simultaneous examinations for the purpose in India as well as in England. The introduction of the decennial census system which led to the compilation of valuable statistical material, also goes to the credit of Lord Ripon.<sup>1</sup>

• Lord Ripon also passed in 1881, the first Factory Act to improve and regulate the working conditions in factories. It was laid down that children between the ages of 7 and 12 years would not now work for more than nine hours a day. The dangerous machinery was to be properly fenced. And Inspectors were to be appointed for the purpose of inspection.

His policy towards the Indian princes too was liberal, as proved by the restoration to power of the Raja of Mysore in 1881, though with certain restrictions. The Raja of Kolhapur became insane in 1882, but Ripon did not make any undue interference in that state. And when the insane Raja died, his successor was permitted to assume powers unhindered.

1. See Smith, W.R., *Speeches of Marquess of Ripon*.

### Conflict with Russia

Though peace between the British and the Afghans was restored by Ripon, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> the British conflict with Russia still continued. Russia had annexed the Khanate of Khokand finally in 1876, and the Tekke Turcomans' territories were occupied in 1881. After this the British learnt that Russia was seeking submission of the chiefs of Merv, about 130 miles away from the frontiers of Afghanistan. When Gladstone was embarrassed by Mahdi in Sudan, Russia coerced these chiefs into submission, which caused much popular excitement in England, so much so that there developed the possibility of a serious clash with Russia on the issue. The situation however was somehow saved.

Russia had proposed a joint Commission to demarcate the north-western frontiers of Afghanistan. But though Lord Ripon appointed an Indian official Sir Peter Lumsden to lead the British mission and also invited the Amir to send his qualified officer, assuming that Russia really desired to cooperate, the Russian response was discouraging. They in fact wanted to delay the matter, and in the meanwhile to realise their ambitions in the area. Their aim rather was to establish a control over the entire body of the nomad Turkoman tribes, and therefore, the Russian government proposed the name of General Zelenoi to lead their mission. But he being ill, had to recover and be given time before he could proceed for the business. The first meeting of the commissioners, therefore, took place much later, i.e. in October 1884, only a month before the next Viceroy Lord Dufferin arrived in India, but the matter was not taken up seriously before February 1885.

In 1884 Lord Ripon retired from India, and with him yet another liberal Governor-General left this country, after having introduced reforms far reaching in their extent and importance. Lord Ripon will ever be remembered in this country as a man of loving disposition, benevolence and broad-mindedness.

Among his best services to this country was the introduction of definite lines of the local self-government. Before him the Indians had not been considered fit for self-rule, and rarely was an effort made to understand their aspirations or to give them a representation and a voice in their own administrative affairs. The Indian soil, it was believed, was not suited at all for the growth of democratic institutions. It goes to the credit of Lord Ripon that he not only broke up this belief, but actually sowed the seeds of representative institutions which germinated and fructified in due course of time. His being considerate, is manifest from his clear instructions that the new experiment was not necessarily meant to improve upon the local

1. See chapter on Lord Lytton.

administration, nor was it necessary that the people would actually understand its merit. Yet it was good for them, as its aim was to educate the people in self-government, and therefore special efforts should be made to associate the people and make it a success.

His steps towards financial devolution were also aimed at giving more say to the indigenous interests in their own affairs. His division of the financial heads into three categories was not as important in its immediate results as in ultimate effects. In fact it was here that the seeds of the provincial autonomy were sown, which germinated, though slowly, bearing their fruits in 1919 and 1935.

Nor was his appointment of Hunter's Commission of Education of less importance. The Education Despatch of 1854 was good, but the real advantage from it could be drawn only if its provisions were put into effect. Lord Ripon made efforts not only to put the spirit of that Despatch into practice, but also improved upon it and tried to see that the Indian interests were thereby served as they should have been.

In fact Lord Ripon was one of those dignified personalities among the British Governor-Generals who ruled India not with the intention that the British control over this country was to last for ever, but with the aim that the Indians should be educated so that ultimately they shoulder their responsibilities themselves. His Ilbert Bill and his appointment of an Indian as the acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court are clear proofs of this. The greater service that he rendered, though indirectly, was the political and national awakening which resulted from the Indian reaction to the amendment of the Ilbert Bill. In fact it would not be an exaggeration to say that the foundations of the Indian nationalism, if not laid, were strengthened by the fruits of Lord Ripon's Indian activities. His freedom to the Vernacular Press, his Factory Act and such other activities make him one of the best and most glittering stars of the modern history of India.

When Lord Ripon retired from India, he was accorded a hero's send-off. On his way back to England Lord Ripon laid the foundation stone of the municipal building opposite the Victoria Terminus Station in Bombay. Pheroza Mehta, the President of the Municipal Corporation read an address of welcome, and the different towns of the Bombay Presidency also presented him their respective addresses at the Town Hall. At the time of his departure when his carriage passed through the streets, it was stopped at the Bhuleshwar and the Mumbadevi temples where the priests blessed the retiring hero with *kumkum* and rice applied to his forehead. Coconuts were presented to him on silver trays, and garlands of pearls and diamonds were hung by the merchants around his neck. The heart of every Indian cried out, 'Long live Ripon, the hero of Indian liberties.'

As he returned to England in 1884, Gladstone appointed him First Lord of Admiralty. Later he became Secretary of State for Colonies. His support for Home Rule in Ireland earned him the 'Freedom of the city of Dublin.' In 1905 Ripon became leader of the House of Lords, but resigned his position in 1908 when Asquith became Prime Minister. He died on 9 July 1909.



## Marquess of Dufferin, 1884-

Marquess of Dufferin was born on 21 June 1826. His father was Price Blackwood, 4th Lord Dufferin and his mother, Helen Selina, was the daughter of Thomas Sheridan. Born as Frederick Temple Blackwood, the Marquess of Dufferin was an old man when he succeeded Lord Ripon as the Viceroy of India in 1884. Twenty years before this appointment Dufferin had the experience of working as Under-Secretary of State for India. During 1872-78 he was Governor-General of Canada, and after this he successively occupied an ambassador's post at St. Petersburg, and then at Constantinople. Immediately before his appointment to India, he was a special commissioner to Egypt. He thus had a varied and vast experience in administration and diplomacy before he came to this country. But being too old now, he had little energy to initiate new programmes and reform plans. He was content with dealing unenthusiastically with whichever problems came his way.

### INTERNAL REFORMS

Regarding his internal reforms, only a brief reference may suffice. A significant development during his period of administration was the passing of the Tenancy Acts which secured more rights and greater security to tenants. The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 provided against increasing rents arbitrarily. The Oudh Tenancy Act of 1886 granted the tenants-at-will the fixity of tenure for seven years, and compensation for the improvements they made in the land less than thirty years before. The Punjab Tenancy Act of 1887 guaranteed to a limited extent against enhancement of rents or eviction of tenants.

Another measure passed under the title of 'The Age of Consent Act,' aimed at improving the social lot of the Indian women. This Act passed by Dufferin raised the age-limit of the girls within

which they were to receive the State protection, from ten to twelve years.

In the time of Dufferin, depreciation in the value of silver and increase in the military expenditure compelled the Government to look for some additional sources of income. Dufferin envied Ripon's popularity with the Indians, and was eager to enjoy such popularity himself, but not at the cost of the favour of the British. Lord Northbrook advised him : 'What you will have to do and no one can do it better, is to keep our rule as popular as is possible in India; and this is, I believe, to be done by making as few changes as possible, and especially by avoiding fresh taxes, and of fresh taxes especially direct taxes, and of direct taxes, especially the income tax.'<sup>1</sup>

Taking this advice, Dufferin decided not to have a resort to income-tax. Instead he extended licence tax on all incomes other than those from land, and applied it without discrimination on the Indians and the Europeans. The result was that he was able to keep both Press and public opinion calm, and yet raised his income. The Burmese War, the frontier defence, new railways and further fall in the value of silver, however, rendered this additional income insufficient. He therefore imposed a small duty on petroleum. The salt duty was also slightly raised, and in this way, without creating much fuss, he was able to make his way through the woods.

Dufferin made special efforts to woo the Muslims by giving greater facilities in the *Haj* pilgrimage, by giving greater attention to the development of their education and providing them with a larger share in the State services. An event of some importance during his time was the celebration of Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee.

A Commission was appointed to report on the problems of recruitment of the Indians to civil services. The Commission submitted its report in January 1888, recommending that a slightly larger number of responsible posts should be given to the Indians. It made no recommendation for raising the age-limit of the Indians, but hinted that raising the age-limit for all may be useful, for in that case Englishmen coming to serve in India should be mature. Dufferin decided to abolish statutory service, and to transfer some posts from imperial service to provincial. But before he could do anything with regard to the matter, he retired.

### BRITISH CONTROL OVER KASHMIR STRENGTHENED

An important development during Lord Dufferin's time was the appointment of a Resident in Kashmir. An increasing number of

1. Nepal, L., *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, pp. 156-57.

Europeans who visited Kashmir during summer had created a problem. They often misbehaved, with the result that Maharaja Gulab Singh had to agree to the appointment of a British 'Officer on Special Duty' in 1852 to control the Europeans during the summer months. The later developments in Central Asia, however, necessitated the appointment of a British political agent in Kashmir, and Northbrook proposed the appointment of a Resident. Maharaja Ranbir Singh resisted, pleading that the Amritsar Treaty of 1846 signed with the State did not permit of it. He, however, himself proposed that the Officer on Special Duty, instead of remaining in Kashmir for six months might continue for eight months to watch the Central Asian developments, the remaining 3 or 4 months of a year requiring no such watchfulness, as due to climatic reasons communication with Central Asia during this period was completely stopped. The Officer on Special Duty thus became a political officer, and to that extent the British hold on the State had been strengthened. We have seen how during this period a British Agent was also appointed at Gilgit, though later on he was recalled. Similarly, to develop Mayo's two-cushion cordon against Russia, the trade contacts with eastern Turkistan through Ladakh were necessitated, and a British Agent appointed at Leh only for six months in 1867, was converted into a permanent appointment.

The British, however, were still not satisfied. Maharaja Ranbir Singh persistently refused to accept a Resident, with the result that the British decided to await his death, and make it imperative for his successor to accept a Resident in order to obtain British recognition. In 1884 when Ranbir Singh fell ill, he did not favour his eldest son, Pratap Singh, and wanted his son Amar Singh to succeed him. Lord Dufferin contacted the Home authorities, and with their approval decided in favour of Pratap Singh. But Pratap Singh, before he succeeded, was to be impressed on of the need to introduce substantial reforms immediately, as the State administration had suffered badly during the recent illness of his father. Such reforms could be carried out only under expert British advice, and the Officer on Special Duty, Sir Oliver St. John was instructed to inform the prince that a Resident would be appointed the day he succeeded to the throne. Pratap Singh protested in vain. He insisted that he himself realised the need of an administrative reorganisation, that he had many plans to introduce reforms and wanted at least a limited time to show his worth. But he was curtly told that a Resident would only help in his administrative plans. He was also made aware of the good that Residents had done in other states.

Ranbir Singh died on 12 September 1885. St. John was appointed Resident, and he took charge of his new office the day Pratap Singh became Maharaja. The new ruler was asked to introduce certain reforms within a prescribed time. These reforms included the construction of roads upto the frontiers to serve the British imperial

interests, as recommended by the Indian Strategic Committee in 1885. Obviously, the Maharaja needed resources, as well as sympathetic officials to carry out his plans. But every interference was made by the British, men like Dewan Lachman Das who enjoyed no confidence of the Maharaja, were imposed on him. Having no free hand, the Maharaja found it difficult to introduce administrative reforms within the prescribed time. This situation brought on him a charge of inefficiency and lack of tact and administrative ability necessary for the changes. Proposals were floated that he should abdicate his authority for a time, so that the reforms which were urgently needed, could be brought about by others who could be relied upon for the purpose. These proposals were concretised by Lansdowne, the successor of Lord Dufferin.

### DARDISTAN

Another important development during this period related to Dardistan, and Gilgit where it was proposed to appoint a British Agent once again. We have seen in earlier chapters how the British wanted to keep these tribal areas free from the Kabul influence, as also from the possibility of a Russian march. They had helped Kashmir to bring Dardistan under its influence, and repeatedly warned Abdur Rehman, the Amir of Afghanistan against casting greedy eyes on it. In 1882, thus, when Abdur Rehman made a bid once again to extend the Afghan influence on Chitral, Ripon warned him in clear words that India was committed to Kashmir suzerainty over that state, and would defend it if need be. Abdur Rehman's reply to this warning, however, was diplomatic. He said he would not interfere in Chitral any more, even if the British severed that State from Afghanistan. Obviously the Amir did not renounce his claims, and in 1883 a direct attack on the state by the Afghans was feared. This drew Aman-ul Mulk, the Chitral ruler closer to Kashmir, and the British were happy.

The Amir of Afghanistan, however, continued threatening the absorption not only of Chitral, but also of Bajaur, Swat and other territories in Dardistan. In 1885 when he came to India and held a conference with Dufferin at Rawalpindi, a proposal was actually considered privately by the British, that in return for the Amir's reconciling to the loss of some territories on his northern frontiers to Russia, he may be allowed to absorb some tribal lands on his south-east frontier. But the matter was never discussed with Amir, for he was surprisingly found to be sufficiently accommodating to the Russian gains, and the policy of keeping the whole of Dardistan firmly under the Kashmir influence continued uninterrupted.

The British continued fearing the possibility of a Russian invasion from across Dardistan. Besides, expansion of the Chinese influence on the side of the Eastern Turkistan also became a problem. In 1885,

therefore, Dufferin decided to make a big exploratory attack on India's northern frontier, to ascertain what routes exactly an invading army could follow, and what passes in the mountain ranges to the north-west of Dardistan need be guarded. Two British parties, one from Kashgar side and the other from Afghanistan side, went to examine lands along the Upper Oxus, while a third party headed by Colonel Lockhart proceeded to examine the Dardistan lands.

Lockhart did a thorough survey of about twelve thousand square miles of the tribal territories, and reached a firm conclusion that the Baroghil Pass which had earlier caused so much concern, was not capable of permitting any considerable foreign army to march through. Therefore, defensive measures were necessary only against small, lightly armed troops which could come across in spring or autumn.

As a result of these surveys, certain other problems developed with regard to the Dardistan areas. Ghazan Khan, the Hunza chief, had not been reconciled to the loss of the Chaprot fort, and in 1886 when Lockhart entered this tribal state, he was allowed to pass only after a considerable delay. Soon after, however, Ghazan Khan was murdered by his own son, Safdar Ali, who joined hands with Nagar and their joint forces and attacked the fort in 1888. The Kashmir garrison was expelled, and for a time it appeared as if the whole of Dardistan was slipping from the Kashmir grip. Although the Kashmir forces re-occupied the fort soon and peace was restored, the whole question whether Kashmir was capable of keeping an effective influence over these tribal areas began to be examined anew. Besides, Safdar Ali not only remained hostile to Kashmir, but towards the close of 1888 he also received a Russian officer, Captain Gromchevsky, and there were rumours of an agreement for Russian training to Hunza men to repel the British designs. To add to this, Ney Elias who headed the exploration party from the Kashgar side, reported that in Yarkand, the Chinese considered Hunza an outlying district of their province Sinkiang into which they intended ultimately to incorporate it. Lockhart also reported that the Hunza chief Ghazan Khan considered himself only the subject of the Chinese king. "Even so, as long as Ghazan Khan, and Safdar Ali after him, were not foolish enough to press this attitude to extremes, the fact that they paid tribute to and received subsidies and presents from both China and Kashmir was winked at by the British authorities."<sup>1</sup>

\* The Chaprot crisis in 1888, however, changed the situation, and Dufferin asserted that Hunza which lay only fifty miles from Gilgit, was the 'natural and necessary' dependency of Kashmir.<sup>2</sup> In the meanwhile, Captain Algernon Durand, the younger brother of

1. Alder; G.J., *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-1893*, p. 161.

2. *ibid.*, p. 163. \*

Dufferin's Foreign Secretary and friend Mortimer Durand, was sent to re-examine the whole situation and recommend measures to safeguard the British interests in Dardistan. Durand recommended that the Gilgit Agency should be re-established, roads and telegraph lines to the areas, subsidies to the chiefs, two thousand British troops at Gilgit, five thousand local levies at Chitral and opening of the Dir-Chitral road were some of his other recommendations.

These recommendations were received in 1889, just on the eve of Dufferin's departure from India. They were, however, all accepted by his successor Lord Lansdowne, and Captain Algernon. Durand himself was appointed as British agent at Gilgit in 1889.

### THE PANJDEH CRISIS

We have seen under Lord Ripon how Russia occupied Merv, only 130 miles away from Afghanistan and created an embarrassing situation for the British. There were Russian generals in Turkistan who lusted after laurels of territorial conquests. One of them, Skobelev, declared : "Our position in Turkistan is most formidable, and the apprehensions of the British are not groundless. Russia had only to fling a column of 15,000 men across the Hindu Kush, and India would rise in rebellion; the Indian army would be so absorbed in keeping order that the passes of the North-West Frontier would be left wide open. If we were successful in our enterprise, we should entirely demolish the British Empire in India; and the effect of this in England cannot be calculated... Competent English authorities admit that an overthrow on the frontiers of India might even produce a social revolution in England... In a word, the downfall of the British supremacy in India would be the beginning of the downfall of England." Again : "The stronger Russia is in Central Asia, the weaker England is in India and the more conciliatory she will be in Europe."<sup>1</sup> The Russian Press, in fact, was not content with the occupation of Merv alone. They also wanted the intervening territories of Panjdeh, and onward, to occupy Herat and thereby obtain a window to the south-east. From there they could advance to the Indian ocean, and fulfil the historic destiny.<sup>2</sup>

We have seen under Ripon, how a joint Commission had been appointed to demarcate the boundary of Afghanistan.

But in the meanwhile, shortly after the arrival of Lord Dufferin in India, Russia claimed that Punjdeh should be independent of the Amir of Afghanistan. Vainly did the British claim that the definition of the Afghan boundaries here too should be left to the commission. By April 1885, the discussions between the commissioners reached a

1. Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, pp. 198-199.

2. *ibid.*, p. 201.

deadlock. Lumsden, the British Member of the Commission, reported repeated aggression by Russian soldiers, and on 9 April received the belated news that the Russians had attacked and driven out a body of the Afghan forces from Panjdeh on 30 March. Here was a challenge to the British. The popular opinion in England was excited beyond limits, and the Conservatives attacked Gladstone for having shown weakness towards Russia. Gladstone also termed the situation as extremely grave, and easily obtained a vote of credit for eleven millions for special military preparations. Military reserves were called out. But neither the British nor the Russians wanted a war. Lord Dufferin handled the situation tactfully; a silent understanding was reached and the Amir was prevailed upon to say that Panjdeh did not really belong to Afghanistan, and that he was prepared to waive his claims upon the territory if his claims on Zulfikar, which lay about 85 miles to the west, were accepted. Since the Russians wanted the first and not the second, and since the public opinion in England was not much educated in the Central Asian geography, the ministry of Gladstone was able to present this as a graceful Russian concession to the British wishes. Thus, the Russian moves on Panjdeh, which Gladstone himself had termed as 'an unprovoked aggression,' were conceded, and the clash was avoided. On 10 September a protocol was signed by Salisbury after the downfall of Gladstone, which covered only Zulfikar.

An assurance had been given to Abdur Rehman that his claims on Panjdeh would be supported at any cost, but the incidents above referred to convinced him that neither England nor Russia was prepared to risk a war for the sake of Afghanistan. The Amir wrote in his remarkable memoirs : "My country is like a poor goat on whom the lion and the bear have both fixed their eyes and without the protection and help of the Almighty Deliverer the victim cannot escape very long." And again he remarked elsewhere : "Afghanistan was between two millstones and it had been already ground to powder."

The negotiations between the commissioners to settle the northern boundary of Afghanistan continued. After some time Lumsden had been recalled and replaced by Sir West Ridgeway. And the Commission ultimately settled the boundary line between Hari Rud, which lay over the spurs of the Poropamisus, and the low ground of the Oxus Valley. But no agreement could be reached over the exact point where the line touched the Oxus. The negotiations continued between Russia, Persia and the British, and it was ultimately in July 1887 only that the matter was settled by a protocol signed at St. Petersburg. By the demarcation of the frontiers upon the line of the Oxus, the British felt to have definitely limited the Russian advance towards Herat. And this was followed by six years of peace, which was broken at last by the rival disputes upon the Pamirs. For this another agreement was concluded in 1895, by which



Afghanistan surrendered territory north of Panjdesb while Bokhara surrendered that part of Darwaz which lay south of the Oxus. After this there was no dispute between Russia and the British on this issue, though resentment remained which developed later into claims and counter claims in Kashmir and Tibet. But the dispute on Afghanistan was settled as Sir Alfred Lyall wrote : "The boundary pillars now set up by British and Russian officers on the Hindu Kush and by the Oxus record the first deliberate and practical attempts made by the two European powers to stave off the contact of their incessantly expanding Asiatic empires."<sup>1</sup>

In 1885 Abdur Rehman visited India and Lord Dufferin held a conference at Rawalpindi. The Viceroy expressed his concern at the weak fortifications of Herat, and proposed to send English Royal Engineers to strengthen them. The Amir declined the offer saying it would be considered by his people to be a sign of compromise with their independence. Dufferin proved wise and did not insist. Friendship was strengthened and the Amir left India highly gratified.

### THIRD BURMESE WAR

Another important landmark in the external affairs was the Third Burmese War (1885) which resulted in the completion of the conquest of Burma. A major part of this country had already been annexed by the British as the result of the First Burmese War in 1826 and the Second Burmese War in 1852. Only the Upper Burma remained where the British merchants continued facing troubles. In 1878 Thebaw acceded to the throne, and during his time the matter took a serious turn. The new king felt bitter against the aggressive trade interests of the British in his country, but tried to curtail them in an unwise manner which invited his doom. His arrogant behaviour towards the British envoy and refusal to correct it, pushed the things to a considerable degree of bitterness and the envoy was ultimately withdrawn in 1879. The British attempts to negotiate a new treaty having failed, proposals began to be made that the Upper Burma too should be annexed. Still, however, the climax was not reached till the king took a step which betrayed on his part an utter ignorance of the basic British strategy in this country. This was his attempt to negotiate commercial treaties with Germany and Italy, but more dangerously with France which had her colonies in Indo-China on Burma's eastern frontier.

This was too serious a matter for Lord Dufferin to ignore. In 1883 a Burmese mission visited Paris, and in 1885, a French envoy reached Mandalay. Though the French Government denied it, it

1. Lyall, Sir Alfred, *The British Dominion in India*, p. 356.



was learnt that an arrangement had been made to establish a French bank in Mandalay. The Burmese Government had imposed a heavy fine on a British trading company. Dufferin took the opportunity and pressed the king to re-investigate this matter. This having been refused, an ultimatum was issued that a British envoy should be admitted at Mandalay, and till the envoy reached there, the proceedings against the company should be stopped. The British should be granted a right to trade with China through Burma. And the Burmese foreign affairs should be conducted only under the advice of the British Indian Government. The king asked for certain modifications in the terms but to his surprise he discovered that the British troops had already marched into his country. No resistance was offered, and the king made an unconditional surrender. Thus, the country of Upper Burma, with about forty lakhs of inhabitants and a territory larger than that of France, quietly passed under the British control in January 1886. Some isolated bands of armed men who had escaped into thick jungles abounding in Burma, continued harassing the British authority by guerrilla warfare for about two years. But despite a heavy British loss both in men and money, peace was ultimately restored. Small fortresses were built all over the troubled area, and mobile columns using these as a base crushed the trouble-makers. Sir Charles Bernard was appointed as Chief Commissioner of the annexed country, who by applying his zeal and energy put the country on lines of economic and social development.

It would perhaps be useless to try to defend the British action in Burma in point of morality. Certain British writers have made an effort to shade the king's character in tyranny and oppression, which even if correct could be no argument for the British to do what they did. There is no doubt that the whole procedure of the British betrayed nothing but a ruthless assertion of the right of the strong over the weak. Yet, though the king had every right to have friendly relations with France, it cannot be denied that in the light of the British imperial interests, and in light of the French character and control over the neighbouring state of Indo-China, the political expediency did require that some such step should be taken as Dufferin did. The British already possessed two-thirds of the Burmese country, and they could ill afford to see French influence established in the rest. If "the French proceedings should eventuate in any serious attempt to forestall us in upper Burma, I should not hesitate to annex that country" wrote Dufferin.

However, before the final British control over Upper Burma, was established, they had to deal with China which claimed a vague suzerainty over that country, as it did on Tibet. Just about this time the British had secured an unwilling consent of the Chinese Government for sending a commercial mission to Lhasa. But the Tibetans themselves prepared to resist such a mission and marched

to Sikkim, and fortified a fort at Lingtu through which the British mission was to pass, the latter decided not to press the matter, and proposed to China to abandon their intention on condition of that country waiving her sovereign claims over Burma, and recognising the British annexation of it. China agreed. The British troops marched and expelled the Tibetans from Lingtu. And thus the matter was settled.

Lord Dufferin has no claims to greatness in the field of any far-reaching social or economic reforms in this country. Curzon writes that he "was careless about detail, interfered very little in departmental business, and left the conduct of all minor matters to his Private Secretary and the officials."<sup>1</sup> His character for the Indians, however, was not disagreeable. He in fact was an exhausted and worn out man already, when he occupied the exalted office in India; and it goes to his credit that if he did not offer any great reforms himself he did not hinder their natural progress. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in his time was an event of great significance and importance. In his foreign policy his attitude towards Burma may be called high-handed, yet it did not completely lack justifications, though they were only imperial. Dufferin was honest to himself, and feeling his own unfitness he got himself relieved from office in 1888, before his actual term expired.

## THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The most important event of the time of Lord Dufferin was the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The nationalism at the time of the great Indian Mutiny of 1857 was not an organised force. But the year 1857 represents the watershed from where new forces were generated which took the shape of mighty torrent in 1885 that steadily developed and fertilised the whole of this ancient land. The different forces, or factors, which led to the development of this mighty torrent of nationalism through the process of a simple signature campaign and different political organisations of local character, offer an interesting study.

### Factors Leading to the Nationalist Movement

India has witnessed waves of invaders from times immemorial : the Bactrians, the Hunas, the Arabs, Turks and Mughals, to count only a few. They all came one after another. But they were, "by an eternal law of history conquered themselves by the superior civilisation of their subjects."<sup>2</sup> During the 18th century, however, India experienced a different problem which was intrusions of the Dutch, Portuguese, French and the English who came from across

1. Curzon, *op. cit.*, II, 286.

2. Marx, *On India*, p. 59.

the seas in the guise only of traders, but soon changed their character into Empire builders. Of these the British were able to outwit the others, and they established their power which was different from the rule established by earlier conquerors. They came here not to be absorbed and to lose their identity, but to rule, exploit and drain this country of wealth which they exported to England. "Hindus were played off against the Mohammedāns...Jats against Rajputs, and Rajputs against Jats, Marathas against the both, Rohillas against Bundelas, and Bundelas against Pathans and so on."<sup>1</sup> The British Government in this country, said Macaulay, was a State "which resembles no other in history and forms by itself a separate class of political phenomenon."<sup>2</sup>

*Positive British Contribution.* The British developed their hold and stayed on, but still remained foreigners setting thereby into motion certain forces which led to the rise of the Nationalist Movement. The contribution of the British rule in India had negative and positive points. Among the positive contributions was the political unity which the British imperialism and English language gave. When the British came, India was a land of warring factions. The Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the divided house of the Muslims among themselves had broken up the country into congeries of States each having its own political and territorial existence. The British pressed them all together under the steam-roller heaviness of their military might, in which besides that of the others the contribution of Lord Hastings was great, which made it easy for the nationalist movement to grow.

Under the British a uniform system of administration was established. The local peculiarities and the racial differences began slowly to die. The administration began to be conducted on "the principle known comprehensively as the rule of law,"<sup>3</sup> which applied equally to all, the Brahmins and the Sudras, the Muslims and the Hindus, and the Bengalis as well as the Madrasis. A regular hierarchy of courts was established in which the princes and the paupers received an equal treatment. Such a system was bound to regenerate in its fourfold strength the "deep underlying fundamental unity, for more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or political suzerainty,"<sup>4</sup> which already penetrated every fibre of this country.

Nor was the development of the speedy means of transport and communication less significant. A network of roads and railway lines laid down for the economic exploitation and strategic purposes

1. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, p. 103.
2. Coupland, R., *The Indian Problem*, Part I, p. 19.
3. See Schuster and Wint, *India and Democracy*, p. 69.
4. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, p. ix.

was bound to have effects very much different from those foreseen. Marx had said that the "railway system will...become in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry."<sup>1</sup> And this proved correct. These means of communication revolutionised the whole economic, social and political life of this country. The Indian people began to travel from one part of the country to another in search of employment. There was an intermixing of population. In the railway compartments all the low castes and high castes sat together. The people moved about and the distances were reduced. This made it possible for the national figures to grow, which developed national in place of the parochial thought, and thus cleared the way for the Nationalist Movement.

Then there was the Western learning which shook India from her stagnant waters of fanaticism and the fantasies of corrupted spiritual thought. There was a time when India was the glory of the world, the great Aryan leaders sang the hymns of Vedas, and the Upanishads and the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the glorious Gita, were not only read, but were understood. Kautilya, the great political thinker, Patanjali the great Indian grammarian, Ashvaghoa the great Buddhist scholar whose work "in richness and variety, recall Milton, Goethe, Kant and Voltaire," Charak the famous author of *Susruta*—a great book of medicine, Kalidasa the 'Shakespeare of India' and the other great scholars were born. There was no branch of science and no branch of art and religion in which India's thought did not develop the depth of perception and greatness of execution. But alas ! with the greatness of perception, as the time passed, India lost her 'why', 'how', and 'wherefore.' The fanatic mental exercises took the place of real understanding. And now India became the land of spiritual speculations and of the fantastic and capricious imaginations. Link with the past was severed and darkness enveloped this ancient land.

On the other hand the reverse happened in Europe where the people slowly emerged from darkness to the light of intellectual glory. The Renaissance revolutionised the European thought. The British came to India and brought their learning into this land. The English literary thought—Byron's praise for liberty, Wordsworth's upholding of the dignity of mankind, Shelley's exhortations to revolt against priestcraft; the spirit of nationalism and love of democracy and self-government of England's great political thinkers such as Locke, Spencer, Mill, Macaulay and Burke; the 'no taxation without representation' cry of the American War of Independence; 'the Equality, Liberty and Fraternity' of the French Revolution; the spirit of the Italian struggle for independence and the accounts of heroic deeds of Mazzini, all travelled into this country.

The new wine of Western learning went to India's head. Realism came into touch with conventionalism : the corrupted imaginations

1. Marx, *On India*, 63.

began to totter, founder and die. New light shone forth and India began slowly to rise from her lethargy of thought and action. The Western manners, social, economic as well as political, began slowly to be absorbed, India began once again to think and plan, and a new age dawned. Great hopes and great aspirations emerged. "Mr Herbert Spencer's individualism and Lord Macaulay's liberalism are, as it were," writes Ramsay MacDonald, "the only battery of guns which India has captured from us, and condescends to use against us."<sup>1</sup>

But there was a darker side to it. Very dark ! The new thoughts and the new aspirations were not Indian but foreign, into which slowly India began to lose her identity and the dangers to her complete cultural death began to loom large. India which had forgotten her past, had now no pride of her own, and no thought and attainment in which to glory.

But just in time came a new movement to rescue India from her mental and moral death. Both Indian and European scholars began to dig into the mysteries of India's past. Ranade, Har Parsad Shastri, R.G. Bhandarkar and Rajindra Lal Mitra ; Max Mueller, Monier Williams, Sir William Jones, Jacobi, Colebrook and Roth; the Asiatic Society and other such organisations, slowly and laboriously removed the centuries' old deep layers of earth underneath which lay buried the gems of India's past glory. It was all brought slowly to the surface. India re-discovered herself and got once again what "is the admiration of the world for its sublime spirituality, its intense devotion, and its depth of intellectual insight..., a culture which has endured for unknown millenia, and a civilisation so magnificent that the world has not yet seen its equal."<sup>2</sup> Here was something to take pride in and something with which to fight the onslaught of the Western culture.

A re-examination of the whole position began, which divided the Indian intellectuals into two schools—Conservative and Liberal. The men like Raja Radhakant Dev considered India's ancient traditions as the highest and the best the man could achieve, and therefore they aspired to go back to India's past. There were, however, Liberals for whom India's salvation lay in striking a compromise between her old and the new which she got from the West. Sri Aurobindo, who in the words of Romain Rolland, was "the most complete synthesis achieved between the genius of the East and West," belonged to this school. These two schools, however, did not represent two extreme lines, and if the one desired openly to borrow something from the West, the other unconsciously did so. The effect in both the cases

1. MacDonald, Ramsay, *Awakening of India*, pp. 124-25.

2. Besant, Annie, *India : A Nation*, p. 71.

was same—the development of the Nationalist Movement.

Four important reform movements emerged, which taking from both the old and the new, though in a varying degree, tried to bring about an awakening among the Indian masses. "In Europe the national unity was the direct outcome of the reform movements. In India too, the reform movements led to the establishment of a national unity." These movements were : the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society and the Rama Krishna Mission.

The Brahmo Samaj "India would not be India if her national movement did not begin in the place of religion. The *Brahmo Samaj* was the first fruit of the British connection," writes K.T. Paul. And again : the Brahmo Samaj founded by Raja Rammohan Roy "was an attempt to express religious life and thought afresh in assimilation of some of the ideas and usages presented by the West." It was "the first phase in the response of India to the West."<sup>1</sup> We have already examined this movement in our earlier pages.

The Arya Samaj. The *Arya Samaj* was "a deliberate turner aside from Western lore to reorder Hindu life and religion so as to save it from falling a prey to the Western influences." It was founded at Bombay in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83), "a hero of the Iliad, or of the Gita, with the strength of a Hercules," as Romain Rolland calls him. Its Lahore branch was started in 1877, where it secured the greatest success. In 1892 the Samaj split into two schools: "those who stood for the Vedic ideals of Brahmacharya and religious service, and those who sought to regenerate society imbibing in due modern Western culture through the modern type of educational institutions."<sup>2</sup> It was, writes Mrs Besant, "Dayanand Saraswati who proclaimed India for Indians." His philosophy was to bring the people "Back to the Vedas," and create pride in their heritage.—"India for Indians". The Samaj worked for the protection of Hindu orphans, for widow remarriage and against the evil customs of the Hindu society. Its famine relief works and its services in the educational fields deserve special commendation.<sup>3</sup>

The Theosophical Society. The *Theosophical Society* was founded by Helana Petrona Blavatsky, a Russian lady, and Colonel

1. Paul, K.T., *The British Connection with India*, (1927), p. 39.
2. Sitaramayya, P., *The History of Congress*, 1, p. 11.
3. See chapters on Northbrook.

Henry Steele Olcott, an American gentleman, at New York in November 1875. The basic principles of the Society were; (1) "To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinctions of race, creed, sex, caste or colour." (2) 'To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science, and (3) 'to investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.' "The function of Theosophists," declared H.P. Blavatsky, "is to open men's hearts and understanding to charity, justice, and generosity."<sup>1</sup>

The founders of the society were invited by Swami Dayanand to come and settle in India, which they did, establishing their headquarters in 1882, at Adyar in Madras. For a time there was a consideration of Arya Samaj and the Society uniting together, but the latter could not reconcile to the sectarian views of the Samaj, and hence kept separate. In 1893 Mrs Annie Besant, an English lady, came to India and joined this Society. Mrs Besant did much to develop India's confidence in her past and declared the ancient Hindus thought as the cream of the philosophy of the world. She was a very eloquent speaker and master writer who by her spoken and written word shook India from her stupor and prepared the Indians for the great part, she said, India must play in the international events.

The Rama Krishna Mission. The *Rama Krishna Mission* drew its inspiration from Rama Krishna (1836-86) whose mighty mouth-piece and disciple, Swami Vivekananda, voiced the world-message of his master, the Message of *Prabuddha Bharata*, or the 'Awakened India.' Swami Vivekananda "was a strong revivalist force of the last quarter of the 19th century. He was the apostle of Modern Vedantism and preached that the world is not *Maya* or illusion but a stage in the evolution of mankind towards progress. At the Parliament of world religions held at Chicago in 1893 he stormed the imagination of all by his striking oratory."<sup>2</sup>

The Mission was formally founded by Vivekananda, a graduate of Calcutta University and a spoiled son of rich parents who later became Swami on 1 May 1897.

Such were the reform movements founded in India, all of which drew their inspiration from India's past, and tried to awaken India and give an impetus to the Nationalist Movement. With the exception of the Arya Samaj which represented the Conservative school, as mentioned above, all these movements openly accepted the value of the Western culture and tried to bring about a synthesis between the East and the West.

1. *Theosophical Review*, Jan. 1970, p. 2 (Varanasi).

2. Raghuvanshi, *op. cit.*, p. 29.



Outside these societies, there were individuals who made their contribution towards the same direction. In fact the Social Reform Movement at its earliest started only with individuals. The lead came from Bengal where Sasipada Bannerji and Ishwara Chandra Vidya Sagar raised their voice against certain evil social practices. In Maharashtra, Ranade, Malabari and Narayan Chandavarkar did so. While in the South, Ragunath Rao, Viresalingam Pantulu and Natarajan arose. "Individuals multiplied steadily into groups in every province until the issue could no longer be neglected by society as a whole."<sup>1</sup> One of the favourite subjects of all these reforms was the condemnation of caste system and an emphasis on the unity of the Indians. And this made its contribution towards the rise of nationalism.

Nor did the renaissance of the Fine Arts lag behind. "Here as in other lines the first efforts at original production were to import Western methods wholesale for presenting Indian subjects. The lead came from Travancore and Poona. This was soon enough resented by Bengal, which made a bold bid for the conventions of the Buddhist period... This very striking enterprise... stimulated a study of old Indian art in its different periods in the different areas." India's past glory in this field was thus discovered, which made its contribution towards nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

Then another positive British contribution was the Indian Press. The pioneer in the field was Hickey who started India's first weekly paper under the name *Bengal Gazette* in 1780. He was followed by others and *The Calcutta Gazette*, *The Indian World*, etc. came into being. These papers though run by the English and printed in English, influenced the Indians by their libertarian thought. Soon therefore they also came into the field, and the papers like *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Indian Mirror*, *The Kesari*, *The Hindu*, *The Bengali*, etc. were started. The Indian press faced many vicissitudes, grew despite the repressive government policy and "congregations of dozens of eager illiterate listeners to a single reader of these papers at a stationery stall or a grocer's shop became common sight."<sup>3</sup>

Among the most eminent writers who were the product of the new age and who influenced India's political thought were Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Keshva Chandra Sen, Hem Chand and Rabindra Nath Tagore. Bankim's single song *Bande Matram* which was used by the people as national anthem and for which they were kicked and imprisoned, played a great part in bringing the people together against the British.

1. Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

2. Majumdar, *Sepoy Mutiny and Revolt of 1857*.

3. *ibid.*

**The Negative British Contribution.** There were besides these some negative contributions which developed India's antagonism towards the British, and worked in no less measure to forge a unity among the Indians.

There were autocratic and imperialistic tendencies of some of India's Governor-Generals which played an important role in bringing about the national awakening. "In the evolution of political progress, bad rulers are often a blessing in disguise," writes Banerjea. And Lord Lytton was one such ruler some of whose measures stirred India's intellectual thought, which "years of agitation would perhaps have failed to achieve."<sup>1</sup> His very costly Delhi Durbar in the background of South India's acute famine, his very costly and aggressive First Afghan War, his abolition of the import duties on cotton for the satisfaction of the Lancashire industry, his vernacular Press Act which imposed discriminating restrictions on the Vernacular press and his Arms Act which forbade the Indians alone from carrying arms without a licence : all these outraged the public opinion. Lord Lytton's Arms Act alone, "inaugurated a policy of mistrust and suspicion, utterly undeserved and strongly resented by our people, and it imposed upon us a badge of racial inferiority."

Ripon was a liberal ruler whose liberal attitude towards the Indians invited the indignation of the European community in India. His Ilbert Bill which permitted the Indian judges to try the Europeans was a signal for the white political agitation in which the European lawyers, merchants, planters and editors all joined together and throwing all propriety and moderation to the winds, hurled open abuses at him. Such was the atmosphere created, writes S.N. Banerjea, that "No self respecting Indian could sit idle under the fierce light of that agitation. It was a call to high patriotic duty to those who understood its significance."<sup>2</sup>

Added to this was the racial antagonism which became more acute after the great Mutiny of 1857. The Europeans called the Indians 'half gorilla, half negro,' and condemned them as those "worshipping stocks and stones and swinging themselves on bamboo trees like bees." G.T. Garrat writes : there was the "long succession of murders and brutalities perpetrated by Englishmen upon Indians which either went unpunished or for which at the demand of the whole European community, only a small penalty was exacted."<sup>3</sup> One European life was considered worth many Indian ones. Indians, they said, understood only fear, and as Zacharias wrote : "The blight of distrust had begun to fall upon England's relations with

1. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 63.

2. *ibid.*, p. 65.

3. Garrat, G.T., *An Indian Commentary*, pp. 116-117; see also Blunt, W.S., *India under Ripon*, pp. 46, 74.

India; those people had mutinied once and committed dreadful atrocities—how could one trust them not to plan further sedition ?”<sup>1</sup>

Then there was a lot of unemployment of India’s educated people. All the key posts went to Europeans, and the Indians were no better than “the helots of the land, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water.” Only a few of the newly created middle class, the class of the intellectuals, remained loyal, while the “remainders tended to group themselves under leaders who may be described, in view of their later history, as Moderates and Extremists.”<sup>2</sup>

But the worst feature of the British rule perhaps was the economic exploitation of this country. Before the arrival of the British, the village in this country was a complete socio-economic-cum-political unit. The village soil was the property of the peasantry, and there existed absolutely no “notion of the ownership of the soil vesting in anybody except the peasantry.”<sup>3</sup> This system, however, soon was broken up and a new class of landlords created which served the two fold purpose of the British—helping firstly, as an agency for the collection of land revenue, and secondly, as very loyal supporters of the British rule. Where there was simplicity, came complexity. The oppression of landlords and a complicated administrative system made the life of the peasants more costly than before. Added to this was the ever increasing land revenue, its commutation in cash and its collection at the harvest time; all of which told heavily on the economic condition of the peasants.

Nor was the affect produced by the British administration on the Indian industry better. India before the arrival of the British was as much “a manufacturing country as an agricultural,” as it was testified by Montgomery Martin in 1840 before the Parliamentary enquiry, and, as he asserted, “her manufactures of various descriptions have existed for ages, and have never been able to be competed with any nation wherever fair play has been given to them.” Indeed, “The English manufactures in the earlier eighteenth century had led an attack against the East India Company because the imports of the superior Indian fabrics were creating a dangerous competition.” Slowly the East Indian Company were prevailed upon, and by 1720 the English merchants “succeeded in securing the complete prohibition of the import of Indian silks and printed calicoes into England, and increasingly heavy duties were imposed on all Indian manufactured cotton goods.”<sup>4</sup> There were several other British measures which affected the Indian industries. And finally came the great Industrial Revolution in the 19th century which flooded the

1. Zacharias, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

2. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

3. Mukerji, Radhakamal, *Land Problems in India*, p. 30.

4. See Dutt, *India To-Day*, pp. 27 and 104.

Indian markets with the cheap machine products of England, and whatever of the Indian industries remained were now completely destroyed under the pretext of the so-called policy of free trade.

There was the costly government machinery in which a good part of the money paid to the English officials was remitted back home in England. Interest of the English capital investment in this country, the cost of India Office and the pensions to the English officials, all imposed a heavy financial burden. Besides, as Nehru expressed : "India had to bear the cost of her own conquest and then of her transfer (or sale) from the East India Company to the British Crown and for the extension of the British Empire to Burma and elsewhere, and expeditions to Africa, Persia, etc. and for her defence against Indians themselves. She was not only used as a base for imperial purposes, without any re-imbursement for this, but she had further to pay for the training of part of the British army in England—'Capitation' charges they were called. Indeed India was charged for all manner of other expenses incurred by Britain, such as the maintenance of British diplomatic and consular establishment in China and Persia and entire cost of telegraph line from England to India, part of the British expenses of the British Mediterranean fleet, and even the receptions given to the Sultan of Turkey in London."<sup>1</sup>

The huge drain of money from India to England can further be imagined from the Parliamentary Report of 1773 which said that at that time about one-third of the total revenue of Bengal was sent to England every year. And this was besides the amount of £ 100,000 which every year went to subsidise the Company's trade in China. This drain became heavier with the passage of every day, and all this "tapped India's very heart blood," as Sir William Hunter remarked in 1880. By that year indeed, as Hunter continued, there were "millions of Indians who go through life on insufficient food."<sup>2</sup>

A contribution towards nationalism was also made by the great Mutiny of 1857. If nationalism was not a cause of the Mutiny, it definitely was a result of it. When the Hindus and the Muslims fought hand in hand together, and when Bahadur Shah declared that he was prepared to resign all his powers into the hands of a confederacy of the princes, it was definitely displayed that India was one nation and all its people of any caste, creed or race were above all Indians and that before the interests of the country as a whole, all other interests must vanish. After the Mutiny was over, the Councils Act of 1861 was passed and this indeed laid the foundations of a system under which whatever amount of powers short of complete independence were given to the Indians. they were going to remain dissatisfied and disgruntled.

1. Nehru, J.L., *The Discovery of India*, p. 252.

2. see Fisher, F.B., *India's Silent Revolution*, pp. 37-38.

The presence of some great leaders like Dadabhai Naoraji "simple but heroic life devoted to the service of humanity," Gopal Krishna Gokhale, "a master of direct expression and lucid exposition," as Chintamani<sup>1</sup> writes of him; Tilak, "the Father of Indian Unrest," Annie Beasant, "an Indian tomtom waking up all the sleepers so that they may wake and work for their Motherland," as she herself wrote<sup>2</sup>; and other heroes like Lala Lajpat Rai also did a lot in inspiring the people towards nationalism.

Under these circumstances the Indian Nationalist Movement slowly made its start, then it grew and became mighty. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the pioneer of the Indian reformers, started in 1829 a signature campaign against the Jury Act passed by the Parliament debarring the Hindu and the Muslim judges from trying Christians, both Europeans and the Indian converts, and putting a seal on the right of these two communities to be appointed on the Grand Jury for the purpose of trying their co-religionists.

The Tagore family also made its contribution towards developing the interest of the people in their political problems and both the father—Dwarkanath—and the son, Devendranath contributed their mite towards bringing about a national awakening. It was mainly due to the efforts of Dwarkanath that the Zamindars Association was organised in 1837 with W.C. Hurry, the editor of the *Englishman*, as one of its secretaries. The Association consisted of the landlords of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and it aimed at the protection of the rights of the landlords against the government revenue measures, and at securing certain political rights to the Indians. The students of history must remember that those were the times when the modern class of the Indian intelligentsia was yet only in inception, and therefore the best element that could be drawn into an organised political movement was only that of the landlords, a class which in its peculiar set-up, itself was created only as a result of the British system of administration.

The most important of the associations of those times, with a distinctly national character, however, was the *British Indian Association* which gathered its strength from the rejection of Bantham's Bill recommending the trial of British subjects in the local courts in place of the Supreme Court alone. The Association was first founded in London in 1839 by a well-meaning Englishman George Thompson who visited India at the invitation of Dwarkanath Tagore and the Bengal India Society in 1843. This Society was later on amalgamated in 1851 with the Zamindars Association and converted into the British Indian Association which attracted to itself the men like Ramgopal Ghosh, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Rajendra Lal Mitra and Peary Chand Mitter. With the efforts of Devendranath Tagore,

1. Chintamani, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

2. Besant, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

education had prepared the ground for the realisation of one of our most cherished ideals, namely united action by the different Indian provinces for the fulfilment of our common National aims and aspirations."<sup>1</sup> In 1878 he undertook a similar tour of South India. An All India Memorial to be presented on the subject to the Parliament was prepared, and Lal Mohan Ghosh, a brilliant orator, was sent to acquaint the British public and the members of the British Parliament with the grievances of India.

"The periods of Lytton and Ripon were truly speaking, the seed-time of national agitation."<sup>2</sup> Lord Lytton's costly Afghan War and his Durbar, which was aptly described as the "costly and gigantic farce." His Vernacular Press Act which according to V. Lovett, had the effect of bringing the "Government and its European Officers into contempt and of exciting antagonism between the governing race and the people of the country."<sup>3</sup> And his Arms Act, which "made it a criminal offence to keep, bear or traffic in arms without licence by Indians," and which according to Surendranath, "inaugurated a policy of mistrust and suspicion."<sup>4</sup> All these gave an impetus to the growing popularity of the Indian Association. And strangely enough, the Ilbert Bill of Lord Ripon, a progressive measure opposed by the European community, also made no less contribution towards this direction.

In 1883, the Indian Association held a National Conference at Calcutta, which has been said to be a turning point in this country's Nationalist Movement. The Conference was attended by delegates from Punjab, the United Provinces, Madras and Bombay. It sat for three days and worked under the presidentship of Anand Mohan Bose, and discussed the national problems like the Parliamentary Government of India, and sending the Indian students abroad for industrial training. The Conference was indeed a "unique spectacle, at the end of which every one present seemed to have received a new light and a novel inspiration."<sup>5</sup>

The second Conference of the Indian Association was held in December 1885, which again was a grand success. On its closing day the proposed first meeting of the Indian National Congress to be held shortly after at Bombay, was announced, and the information was received by the delegates with cheers. The Association later co-operated heartily with the Congress, and its national activities slowly passed on to the latter body.

1. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, pp. 46, 51.
2. Raghuvanshi, V.P.S., *The Indian Nationalist Movement and Thought*, p. 43.
3. Lovett, V., *History of Nationalist Movement*, p. 22.
4. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 50.
5. Majumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, p. 45.

## THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The All India Congress was founded in the time of Lord Dufferin in December 1885 as the result of the efforts of Allen Octavian Hume, a retired English official. Hume had joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1849, worked with distinction, and was raised in 1870 to the post of Secretary to the Government of India, and this post he held till his retirement in 1880 when he was offered the Lieutenant-Governorship of Punjab which he declined and settled in Simla where he started his activities towards the establishment of the Congress.

The Congress, as it was founded, may to some extent have been the by-product of the Theosophical Society as it was claimed by Mrs Annie Besant;<sup>1</sup> but mainly it was the fruit of the political movements which had been going on in this country right from the beginning of the 19th century, and which now took a formidable shape. Hume, who according to William Wedderburn, had realised with "increasing anxiety, that the existing government, administered by foreign officials on autocratic lines, was dangerously out of touch with the people," met Lord Dufferin who was convinced that there was a need at that time of some political organisation in the country which would work serving the purpose as "Her Majesty's opposition did in England." It was desired, the Viceroy told Hume, that the Indian politicians "meet yearly and point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved."<sup>2</sup> Or in other words, the need for an organisation which could act as a safety valve for the rising political ambitions of the Indians was felt, and this was the purpose for which the Congress was to be organised.

It would, however, be too much to agree with certain writers, as Dr Raghuvanshi does,<sup>3</sup> that the main purpose of Hume in organising this body was to "save the British Empire." The Viceroy may have joined him with this view, but the ultimate aim of Hume himself seems to have been different.

In a pamphlet named *An Old Man's Hope*, Hume addressed the Englishmen thus: "All men! well fed and happy! Do you at all realise the dull misery of these countless myriads?...toil, toil, toil; hunger, hunger, hunger; sickness, suffering, sorrow; these alas, alas, alas, are the key-notes of their short and sad existence." And again, on 1 March 1883, he addressed the graduates of the Calcutta University in a circular letter thus: "Constituting as you do a large body of the most highly educated Indians, you should, in the natural order of things, constitute also the most important source of all mental, moral, social and political progress in India. ..In vain many aliens

1. See *How India Wrought for Freedom*, pp. 1-2.

2. Wedderburn, William, *A.O. Hume*, pp. 122-31.

3. Raghuvanshi, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-47.



like myself love her children...but they lack the essential of nationality, and the real work must ever be done by the people of the country themselves." And then his vigorous speech in April 1888 at Allahabad advocating a propaganda among the Indian masses on the lines of that of the Anti Corn Law League in England : all these activities were certainly different from those which the believers of the 'Save British Empire' theory could safely follow. It was not in vain that the British authorities in India threatened to deport Hume, and in October 1888 Sir A. Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, addressed him a letter covering about 20 pages, warning Hume of the consequences of his activities, to which, however, Hume replied in 60 pages.

Still it would be too much to say that at that early period, Hume or any of his co-workers should have aimed at the complete overthrow of the British rule. Their immediate aim was to secure a Government which should work for India, and not for England, with the ultimate end to train the Indians to become capable of handling their problems themselves on the national lines.<sup>1</sup> And if this is correct, the ultimate end of the British Empire was a foregone conclusion.

Be that as it may, the response to Hume's activities from among the Indians being good, the first meeting was held at Bombay in 1885, under the Presidentship of W.C. Banerjee, a leading barrister of Calcutta, and a body known as the Indian National Union, which was renamed later at the suggestion of Dadabhai Naoroji as Indian National Congress was founded.

The aims and object of the Congress, as declared by its first President in his presidential address, were : (1) "The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all more earnest workers in our country's cause in the various parts of the Empire;" (2) Consolidation of the national sentiments, and eradication of the prejudices of race, creed and a province; (3) To keep authoritative record of the mature Indian views, on important matters concerning this country; and (4) "Determination of the methods by which during the next twelve months it is desirable for native politicians to labour in public interest."<sup>2</sup>

In the history of the programmes and progress of the Indian National Congress, a definite phase is discernible between 1885 and 1905.

During this phase the Congress drew its inspiration from Western

1. Wedderburn, W., *Biographical Sketch of A.O. Hume*, pp. 20-21.
2. Andrews, C.F. *The Rise and Growth of Congress in India*, pp. 3-27.  
Banerjee, A.C., *Indian Constitutional Documents*, II, pp. 83-84.

ideas and making a searching enquiry into the Indian problems, slowly perfected its theory of reforms and matured the aims to the achievement of which it strived.

Among the objects for which the Congress during this period worked, were : (1) the extension of irrigation, (2) moderate assessment of the land revenue, (3) stoppage of the export of grain from India, (4) the establishment of agriculturists to save them from exploitation at the hands of money-lenders, (5) development of Industries in India, (6) lowering of taxation telling directly upon the poor, (7) reduction of foreign element in the Government so as to lower its cost, (8) development of education, (9) separation of executive from judiciary, (10) police reforms, (11) protection of the interests of the Indians abroad, (12) protection of the civic rights and liberties of the people, and above all, (13) as Surendranath declared in the third Congress : "We unfurl the banner of the Congress, and upon it are written in characters of glittering gold, which none may efface, the great words of the resolution : Representative Institutions for India."

The methods of the Congress were passing of resolutions, sending of deputations and presentation of petitions. The Congress held regular meetings, and made every effort to focus public opinion on the important national problems. And the most noteworthy of the facts is that it carried on its activities not only in India, it adopted the methods of influencing the public opinion in England as well. In 1887, thus, the Indian Reform Association was founded in England as a result of the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji who now took up a permanent abode there to work for India. The Labour leader, Charles Bradlaugh, openly supported this Association and assumed in the Parliament rather the title of "Member for India". The British Committee of the Indian National Congress was founded in England in 1889, which was joined by several well meaning Englishmen like Walter S.B. McLaren, W.S. Caine and George Yule. The Committee started its journal *India* in 1890, on which William Digby, Gordon Heward and Henry Cotton worked as its successive editors. Dadabhai being elected to the British Parliament in 1892; in 1893 the Indian Parliamentary Committee was established on which Sir William Wedderburn, W.C. Caine and Lord Clywd worked, and securing the support of some Independent and Labour members, it tried to present the Indian problems in Parliament in their true shape.

The attitude of the Government of India towards the Congress was friendly in the beginning, but it grew hostile later. Its first session was thus attended by certain distinguished officials—Sir Henry Cotton, the Chief Secretary to Government, and Sir William Wedderburn of the Civil Services. This session was attended by 72 delegates in all. The second session of 1886 was attended by 406 delegates at Calcutta, where some of them were received by Viceroy Dufferin as the "distinguished visitors to the capital." Its third session held at

Madras in 1887 was attended by about 600 delegates, who were given a colourful reception by the Governor of Madras at Government House.

### Hostile Government Attitude

But by this time the real aims of the founders of the Congress having come to the surface as a result of some brilliant pamphlets and poems of Hume, the Government started gathering a hostile attitude, and began to place every obstacle before its Allahabad session of 1888. Besides, Dufferin tried to woo the Muslims by posing as their benevolent protector. The Muslims began to be weaned away from the Congress which was dubbed as a Hindu organisation, and Dufferin was happy that his activities resulted, into a 'recrudence of communal rioting.' Sir Syed Ahmed, a leader of the educated Muslims, was in such circumstances able plainly to write to Badruddin Tyabji, a Muslim member of the Congress in 1888: "I do not understand what the words 'National Congress' mean. Is it supposed that the different castes and creeds living in India belong to one nation, or can become (one) nation, and their aims and aspirations be one and the same? I think it is quite impossible...you regard the doings of the misnamed Congress as beneficial to India, but I am sorry to say that I regard them as not only injurious to our own community but also to India at large." To this Tyabji replied, the Congress was "nothing more and should be nothing more than an assembly of educated people from all parts of India and representing all races and creeds met together for the discussion of only such questions as may be generally admitted to concern the whole of India at large."<sup>1</sup>

Dufferin when blessing the foundation of the Congress in 1885, had probably got himself too much influenced by Hume's arguments and his occult experiences. But later on when he found the Congress developing into an organised opposition to the administrative excesses and demanding share for the people of India in the Government of their own land, Dufferin grew sharply critical, and declared that out of the total Indian population of 200 millions, not more than eight thousand had received a university education. 'I would ask, then, how any reasonable man could imagine that the British Government would be content to allow this microscopic minority to control their administration of that majestic and multiform empire for whose safety and welfare they are responsible in the eyes of God and before the face of civilisation ?'<sup>2</sup>

The Government hostility thus continued growing after 1888, till in 1906 the end was reached and some of the Congress members getting tired, decided to break with the party and follow extremist lines

1. Quoted Gopal, S., *British Policy in India, 1858-1905*, p. 159.

2. *ibid.*, p. 175.

against the Government.

Despite the Government hostility, however, the Congress grew popular among the Indians. Its Allahabad session was attended by 1,248 delegates, and the number grew every year. The 1889 session of the Congress, was yet more impressive in being attended by a member of the British Parliament, Mr Bradlaugh, who declared before the delegates : "For whom should I work, if not for the people? Born of the people, trusted by the people, I will die of the people. And I know no geographical or race limitations."<sup>1</sup>

Regarding its achievements we may quote G.N. Singh, according to whom, "the early Congress did in those days a great amount of spade work in national awakening, political education and uniting Indians and in creating in them the consciousness of a common Indian nationality."<sup>2</sup> Besides, the Congress also succeeded in effecting a breach "in the outer ramparts of a benevolent despotism." The Parliamentary enquiry into the administrative problems, and the political rights conceded to India by the Indian Councils Act of 1892, could also be counted among the gains of the Congress. The Government Notification of 1890 prohibiting the Government employees from attending the Congress meetings even as visitors, and the Government's proposed measure in 1894 whereby the political freedom of the legal practitioners was sought to be curtailed, were cancelled at the instance of the Congress.

Still, the Congress failed to satisfy the more progressive of the Indians who laughed at the concessions secured in the Councils Act of 1892, which were indeed a sham and no substance. It is said, the Congress of those days represented only the upper strata of society, and had absolutely no contact with the problems of the Indian masses, illiterate and poor. It sought after concessions and no rights, and it arose from without, not from within the Indian people. That is why the younger and the more enthusiastic elements in it could not be contained, and ultimately this element, which was known as the extremist, had to break away in order to find its expression outside and elsewhere.

Yet when all is considered, writes Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya : "We cannot blame them for the attitude they adopted as pioneers of Indian political reform, in more than one can blame the brick and mortar that is buried six feet deep in the foundation and plinth of a modern edifice."<sup>3</sup>

1. See Besant, Annie, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 99.
2. Singh, G.N., *Landmarks in the Indian Constitutional and National Development*.
3. Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, *op. cit.*, I, p. 79.

Dufferin retired from India in 1888 and was made Lord Dufferin and Ava. He was also appointed Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and received freedom of several English cities, as also honorary degrees from the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin and Harvard. Immediately on his retirement he was appointed Ambassador to Rome, and two years later to Paris. He retired from public life in 1897 and was somehow involved in the fraudulent accounts of a mining venture known as Whitaker Wright scandal. The death of his eldest son in the South African War in 1900 clouded his last days and he died on 12 February 1902.

“Handsome, talented and popular, Dufferin...was seldom idle, and quite late in life he started to learn Persian. His courtesy and appearance were those of the ideal diplomat.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Merry Viscount, *The Viceroy and Governor-Generals of India*, pp. 103-104.

## Marquess of Lansdowne, 1888-1893

Marquess of Lansdowne was the eldest son and successor of Henry, the 4th Marquess, and was born on 14 January 1845. He was educated at Eton and Balliol, and was only 24 when his father died and he became a Member of the House of Lords. Almost immediately he was made a Junior Whip. He married Maud Hamilton, the daughter of the First Duke of Abercorn in 1869. He was Under-Secretary for War from 1872 to 1874, was appointed Governor-General of Canada in 1883 and after his retirement from that post in 1888 he was offered the Viceroyalty of India.

### THE INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

Lansdowne succeeded Dufferin as the Viceroy and the most serious problem he had to face in internal affairs was the fall in the value of the Indian rupee, which seriously dislocated the country's finances. During the latter half of the 19th century several new silver mines had been opened, which glutted the world markets with this metal. The Latin Union States renounced their bimetalism, while there was a demonetisation of silver in Germany. The gold standard countries did not feel these developments very much, but those with the silver standard, more particularly those, among them like India, who were heavily indebted to the gold standard countries, had to suffer heavily. India, which had to pay large amounts of money to England—a gold-standard country, in the shape of pensions, the expenses on the India Office, the interest on the English capital investments in India, etc., felt the fall in the silver prices more acutely. The price of the rupee fell steadily after 1873. In 1873 the rupee sold in England at two shillings and three pence, while by 1892 its price fell to as low as one shilling and one penny. The Burmese war had already told heavily on the Indian finances. But the fall in the price of the rupee made the situation utterly difficult. Unexpected deficits appeared and even the best calculated forecasts of the Indian finance members began to be belied. In 1892, for instance, the Indian Government

discovered that it would have to raise an extra amount of six million sterling by way of taxation, from what otherwise should have been sufficient. Income-tax was re-imposed, and the already unpopular salt tax was enhanced. The problem, however, was still not solved. Ultimately, with the approval of the Home Government, Lord Lansdowne had to resort to another expedience. The estimates showed that if India made payments to England in 1892-93 at the ratio obtained in 1873-74, it would pay Rs 122, 127, 160 less than what she actually paid. The seriousness of the problem may be comprehended from the fact that the total budget for expenditure in 1892-93, was not more than Rs 91 crores.<sup>1</sup> The International Monetary Conference held at Brussels in 1892 to solve the problem came to naught. A committee appointed under Lord Herschell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer made certain recommendations and a few remedial measures were adopted.

Income-tax was re-imposed, and the already unpopular salt tax was enhanced. The problem, however, still defied solution. Ultimately, with the approval of Home Government, Lord Lansdowne had to resort to another expedience under which an unrestricted coinage of silver in the Indian mints was stopped, and the exchange ratio between the sovereign and a rupee was fixed at one to fifteen. The tendency of the rupee to fall in value, however, still could not be curbed, and it continued to intrigue the Indian authorities till at least 1895.

Among other measures of Lansdowne's time was the passing of a new factory law which introduced certain changes in the Factory Act of 1881, fixing thereby the daily hours of work for women at eleven. The minimum age of the children employed in the factories was raised from 7 to 9 years, and their hours of work were fixed at 7. Children, henceforth, were not to work in the night, and a weekly holiday was made compulsory for all the factory workers.

The other legislative measures of his time consisted of the Official Secret Act of 1889 to punish such newspapers which published official documents without the permission of Government, or tried to acquire some secret information from a responsible public servant. The legislation was condemned by the Indian Press almost unanimously, and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* termed it as "something like a Gaggling Act."<sup>2</sup>

The Indian Census Act was passed in 1890 to invest the Census officers with some needed powers to facilitate their work and to punish those who created obstacles such as disfiguring of the house

1. See Misra, J.P., *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne (1888-1894)*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 136-137.

2. *ibid.*, p. 163.



numbers during the Census operations.

Under the existing laws, the sexual intercourse by a man with his child-wife, if she was not below ten years of age, was not rape and so was not punishable. But the limit of ten years was too low, and there were innumerable reports of premature cohabitation and consequent physical injuries to immature girls. A case occurred in 1890 in Bengal in which the bride died as a result of such premature cohabitation and the law could not award more than one-year punishment to the husband. This aroused the public conscience. The matter was widely discussed in the contemporary newspapers. The Missionary Conferences and the Indian National Social Conference presided over by Mr Justice K.T. Telang demanded a remedial measure, and the Government passed the Age of Consent Act in 1891. Under this Act, the age of consent for girls was raised from ten to twelve years. The new age limit though not high enough saved a considerable number of young girls from comparatively more premature sexual harassment.

### THE INDIAN COUNCILS ACT OF 1892

The circumstances which necessitated the Councils Act of 1892 first deserve attention. The Councils Act of 1861 had established legislative councils, but these councils failed to satisfy the Indian aspirations. The element of non-officials did not represent people. It consisted only either of big zamindars, retired officials or the Indian princes, none of whom could claim to understand the problems of the people. They had an attraction neither for the councils, nor for the legislative duties they were called upon to perform. The powers of the legislative councils were so limited that their laws represented nothing better than the Government orders. They had no elected element, and acted merely as registering bodies.

While on the other hand a new class of intelligentsia, inspired with the liberal ideas of the West, was constantly growing in this country, whose aspirations and ambitions the existing system obviously could not satisfy. "Indeed, by the end of 1870's when the Second Afghan War broke out, a strongly critical Indian press was already in existence, notably in Bengal. So outspoken was Press comment on governmental activities that special powers had to be taken to deal with it. But it proved to be the beginning of the Modern Indian Nationalistic Movement."

The new universities played their role and brought the Indians closer to the Western liberal thought; while the repressive governmental policy played its part, particularly after the Mutiny, and tried to repress this surging spirit, thereby, however, energising it yet more. Lord Lytton's regime brought the things to a breaking point but he could not suppress the longing for the freedom of thought.

Then, just at this juncture Gladstone returned to power in England with a keen interest in Indian affairs and fixed determination to apply more liberal principles to the Indian Government. His appointment of Lord Ripon, a Liberal, as Viceroy in 1881 showed the way his mind worked, and one of Lord Ripon's reforms, directed towards making Europeans in India amenable under certain conditions to the authority of the Indian judicial officers, was the 'event "which brought the Indian National Congress into existence."<sup>1</sup>

The Indian National Congress founded in 1885 as a result of the efforts of A.O. Hume and Surendra Nath Bannerjea as, we have seen, soon grew popular. In its very first session of 1885 it passed a resolution calling for the expansion of the Supreme Legislative Council by addition to it of elected members. It demanded that every year the budget must be referred to the Council for discussion, and the Council must be given the powers to interpellate the executive.<sup>2</sup> Such demands were repeated every year; and as the Congress grew popular with the growing number of delegates attending its sessions, from only 72 in the first session to 450 in the second, 600 in the third and 1,250 in the fourth; its demands could not be brushed aside lightly. The Government though friendly towards it in the beginning, grew hostile later on, yet as G.N. Singh writes, the Councils Act of 1892 was 'mainly the result of the efforts of the Congress.'<sup>3</sup>

Another thing which facilitated the passage of the Councils Act of 1892 was the growing anxiousness of the European merchants to have a say in the Council so that their interests were not sacrificed before those of the London city merchants. And the Government too gave in and did prepare itself for a reform, though from a selfish motive of Lord Dufferin that a more powerful Council in India would give a greater freedom to the Indian Government from the India Office, and that the wider membership of the Council would help the Government gauge the public opinion more effectively.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Dufferin appointed in 1888 a Committee of his Council under the chairmanship of Sir George Chesney, asking it to prepare "a plan for the enlargement of our provincial Councils, for the enhancement of their status, the multiplication of their functions, the partial introduction of the elective principle and the liberalisation of their general character as political institutions." At the same time he declared in plain words that "India's destinies have been confined to an alien race. All that the government hoped to do was...to place themselves in contact with a larger surface of Indian opinion." It would be a mistake, he said, to assume that the Government aimed at setting up a British

1. Coatman, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

2. See Banerjee, A.C., *Indian Constitutional Documents II*, pp. 85-89.

3. See his *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development*, p. 216.

model of Parliamentary system. The Indian executive was bound to remain responsible not to any Indian authority, but to the British Crown and the British Parliament. Such thus was the attitude under which the Committee was called upon to work. The report of the Committee together with the views of Lord Dufferin himself was sent to the Home Government, requesting it for a reform in the Councils with the main aim "to give a still wider share in the administration of public affairs to such Indian gentlemen as by their influence, their requirements, and the confidence they inspired in their own countrymen, are marked out as fitted to assist with their Council the responsible rulers of the country." Later on when Lord Lansdowne took over in India from Dufferin, his views on the matter were also invited. It was on this basis that the Conservative Ministry at Home slowly moved. A Bill was introduced in 1890 in the House of Lords, which proceeded with a snail's gallop, and was passed only in 1892 as the Indian Councils Act.<sup>1</sup>

### The Provisions of the Act

The Act dealt exclusively with the powers, functions and composition of the legislative councils in India. With regard to the Supreme Legislature, the Act provided that the number of the 'Additional Members' may be raised to a minimum of 10 and maximum of 16. Subject to the approval of Secretary of State in Council, the Governor-General was to make regulations under which the nomination of the 'Additional Members' was to be made. Two-thirds of the 'Additional Members' were to be non-official, for the half of whom the principle of election was conceded to a limited extent, though after being so elected a member had to get himself nominated by the Government before he sat in the Council. The functions of the Council were greatly enlarged. It was now permitted to discuss the annual financial statements under certain restrictions. "It is not contemplated," as Lord Curzon commented, "to vote in the budget in India item by item in the manner in which we do it in this House. But it is proposed to give opportunities to the members of the Councils to indulge in a full, free and fair criticism of the financial policy of the Government." The members could address questions to Government on matters of public interest, "subject to such conditions and restrictions as may be prescribed in the rules made by the Governor-General or the provincial Governors." But every question required a six day's notice before being answered. And the President could at his discretion disallow a question without giving any reason.

In the Provincial Councils also the number of the 'Additional Members' was enlarged. In the Councils of Bombay and Madras for instance, their minimum number was to be 8, while the maximum would be 20. For Bengal too the maximum was the same, while for

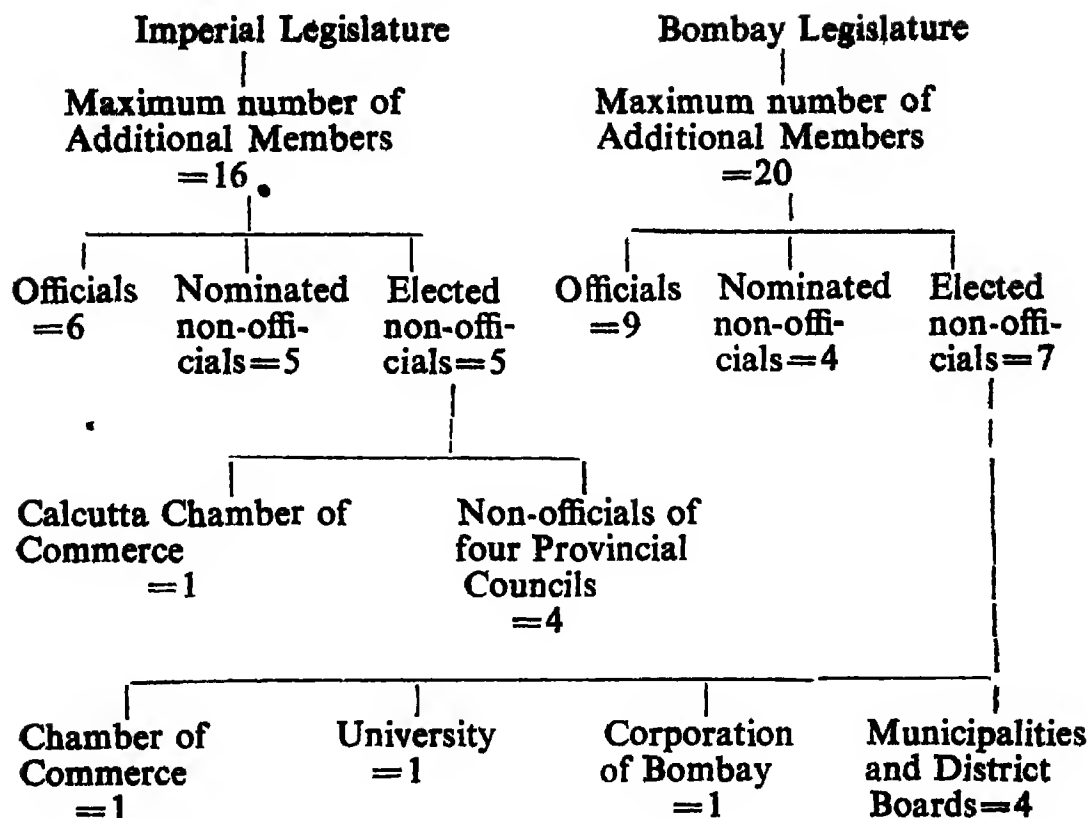
1. See *Report on the Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918*, p. 428.

the North-West Provinces the maximum was to be 15. In their functions, the members secured the right of interpellation in matters which concerned general public interest. They could discuss the policy of Government and ask questions, which however, as in the case of the Centre, required a six days' previous notice. And their questions too could be disallowed without forwarding any reason.

*The Kimberley Clause.* More significant was the principle of elections which the Act introduced, though the word 'Election' was very carefully avoided. This principle did not exist in the original draft, but was later on introduced during its second reading as an amendment by Lord Northbrook who was supported by Lords Ripon and Kimberley. The amendment, after a considerable number of difficulties was accepted. In addition to the officials and nominated non-officials, the Imperial Legislature was thus to have elected non-officials, whose number was to be five, and who were to be sent one each by the non-official members of the four Provincial Councils, and one by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce. In the case of the Provincial Councils the bodies permitted to elect members were to include among them the Municipal Committees, the District Boards, the University Senates, the zamindars and the Chamber of Commerce. The method of election however was to be different. Instead of electing one member, both for the Centre and the provinces, the bodies concerned were to recommend panels of names from each one of which the head of the government concerned was to nominate one. The clause relating to the subject said, it will be possible for the Governor-General to make arrangements by which certain persons may be presented to him, having been chosen by election, if the Governor-General should find that such a system can properly be established. The detailed rules with regard to the above therefore were made by Lansdowne himself who actually favoured a straight election system, but whose proposal to this effect was rejected by the Home Government.<sup>1</sup> The distribution of the elected members in the Imperial and, say for instance, in the Bombay Councils was as shown on the next page.

The Councils Act of 1892 thus brought about a significant improvement in the existing system. The greatest merit of the Act was the introduction of the elective principle, though in an indirect manner. A beginning was made, and though the goal of the representative government was far off, yet progress, if slow, was definitely in the right direction. It was for the first time that the Indians were to be associated with the highest legislative functions in the right manner. And though their number was only one-third and the official majority could easily dominate and override them, yet their views always secured due attention and respect, and through them if not fully, at least to some extent, the grievances of the Indian people were ventilated. The Councils Act of 1892 was definitely an improvement on that of 1861. No discussion of the financial policy of the

1. See for details, Misra, J.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 185-198.



government had hitherto been allowed except at the time of levying a new tax. But now regular financial statements were to be placed before the members, and they had the opportunity of criticising and advising the government in the interests of the tax payer. It was rightly felt by the authorities that through this provision, "the Government will have an opportunity of explaining their financial policy, of removing misapprehensions, of answering calumny and attack, and they will also profit by the criticism delivered in public position, and with due sense of responsibility by the most competent representatives of non-official India." Nor was the permission of the right to question the executive of less importance. Though there were restrictions placed on it, yet these restrictions were not more severe than those in the Commons in England. The powers and the functions of the Councils were greatly increased, and so was their size.

There is no doubt that there were certain defects in the provisions which could completely satisfy neither the people nor their government. There was a reason for the people's dissatisfaction because, as Sir V. Chirol wrote: "The Indian Councils Act of 1892 was a first approach to the admission of the elective principle in the representation of the Indian unofficial opinion in the Viceroy's legislative council but on a minute scale and in a round about way."<sup>1</sup> 'Principle of election or Government by representation.'

1. Chirol, V., *Indian Unrest*, p. 269.

said Lord Salisbury, "was not an eastern idea and it did not fit traditions or eastern minds." But such assertions could hardly satisfy the growing class of intelligentsia who wanted to import the liberal ideas of the West into this country. While on the other hand, as asserted in the official circular of 1907, the Government of India considered the effect of these provisions beyond their expectations, and concessions too great for the Indians to deserve.

Nor was the number of the non-officials now admitted in the Councils such as could satisfy the people's aspirations. Out of the total membership of 25 of the Imperial Legislature for instance, the number of the nominated and the elected non-officials was only 10, while this latter number too became ineffective when the nominated element always sided with the Government, leaving the rest 5 elected members to do their best. Lord Curzon's assertion "that the efficiency of a deliberative body is not necessarily commensurate with its numerical strength," could hardly satisfy the people. And even some of the Europeans like Mr Schwann agreed that the addition in the non-official number was only "very paltry and miserable." R.C. Dutt rightly said, "Half a dozen members elected under somewhat complicated rules, can scarcely express the views of the people with a population of 30 or 40 millions or more."<sup>1</sup>

The Act bestowed no care on establishing a balance between the representation of different classes or territories. The representation given to general public was insignificant. Some got an over representation, while the others got none. Thus for instance in Bombay, while the European merchants got representation, the Indians secured none. Nor was any principle followed on the territorial basis. "The Act", said Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, "still left Indians without any real voice in the administration of this country."

The powers granted to the legislative councils also left much to be desired, and W.C. Bonnerjee aptly remarked : "The Act does not profess to give us much. We must go on with our agitation and not stop until we get what we all think and we all believe that what we have a right to get." Under the Act "the budget could be discussed but not until after the estimates had already been settled by the executive." No resolutions could be moved, and no supplementary questions admitted. It was the discretion of the President whether to allow a question or to disallow it—for which no reason was to be given. The addition to the councils' legislative powers was the least enviable, and Pherozeshah Mehta correctly remarked, that the Act "may be aptly described as a most superb steam engine in which the necessary material to generate steam was carefully excluded, substituting in its place coloured shams to look like it."

The Act had authorised the Governor-General to make rules subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, regarding the conditions under which the nomination of the 'Additional Members' was to be made. And commenting on the rules thus made, Gokhale observed : "I will not say that they have been deliberately so framed as to defeat the object of the Act of 1892, but I will say this if the officer who drafted them had been asked to sit down with the deliberate purpose of framing a scheme to defeat that object, he could not have done better."<sup>1</sup>

Under the provisions as they were made, the office of the member of a legislative council was hardly something enviable. Sir Barnes Peacock said : "He had always understood and he still held that the office of a member of Council was a high and honourable one; but if he believed that the constitution of his council was such that its members were bound to legislate in any manner that either the Board of Control or the Honourable Court of Directors might order, he should say that instead of being a high and honourable office, it was one which no man who had a regard for his own honour and independence, could consent to hold..."

Yet, although the process of democratisation was far from being complete, to a certain extent it met the "new and relatively feeble demand" of the Indians. Moreover, in place of the princes and the *zamindars*, the elective principle now ensured that only those would be sent to the Councils who had comparatively better talent, and who commanded a greater respect among the people. These elected persons though considered inferior by the official element, got a chance to display their genius, and prepared the way for greater confidence to be placed in them. The persons like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Phrozeshah Mehta when given such opportunity, were to make their mark, and prepare the nation for the Nationalist Movement.

The Act, we may conclude with the words of Coatman, "introduced into India the principle of election of representatives....the principle of representation also was strengthened, and then firmly in the direction of parliamentary responsible self-government."<sup>2</sup>

## RELATIONS WITH THE INDIAN STATES

### Manipur

In his relations with the Indian States, Lansdowne had to handle certain problems in Manipur where the ruling prince Raja Sur

1. Bannerjee, A.C., *op. cit.*, II pp. 137-39.
2. Coatman, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25 ; *Cambridge History of India*, VI, Chapter XII; Chintamani, C.Y., *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.



Chandra was expelled in 1880 by a rebellion led by his own brother who was the State Senapati, or the commander of forces. The Yuvraj, the heir-apparent, was at this time absent, but still was suspected of having a complicity in the rebellion, as it further seemed to be confirmed by his coming back and occupying the throne. Sur Chandra's appeal to the Governor-General for help was rejected due to his imbecility, and an offer was made for the recognition of the new successor provided he dismissed the Senapati. The matter, however, could not be decided peacefully. Quinton, the Commissioner of Assam, was sent to study the situation. But he was opposed by the Senapati. A fight ensued in which some British officers were killed. Lord Lansdowne immediately ordered an expedition to be despatched, which resulted in the capture of the new successor as well as the Senapati. Both were later on tried according to law and put to death. A similar treatment was meted out to some other persons implicated in the matter, and another boy from the family was selected and put on the throne. A political agent was appointed to administer the country during the boy's minority. Lord Lansdowne declared that "it is admittedly the right and duty of Government to settle the succession in the protected states of India generally." But at the same time it was effectively demonstrated that the British were no more anxious to annex any state even at the face of such provocations as were given as a result of the killing of the British officers.

The British right to interfere and make the affairs of the Indian states run as they wished was asserted further in the case of Khan of Kalat who in 1892 executed his Wazir together with the latter's son and father. The Khan was called upon to explain his conduct which he could not do satisfactorily, and therefore with the assent of his Sirdars among whom he had become utterly unpopular due to his cruelties, the Khan was deposed to be succeeded by his son.

### **Sikkim**

Sikkim had entered into an agreement with the British in 1861 acknowledging British supremacy. The ruler of the State, under this agreement, could not directly enter into negotiations with a foreign power. Of late, however, the Maharaja of Sikkim had fallen under the Tibetan influence. He had a Tibetan wife who wielded considerable influence over the State affairs, and he started spending about three months every year in Tibet on the grounds of health. In 1886, Tibetan troops occupied some Sikkim territories and garrisoned a fort at Lingtu. The Maharaja showed absolutely no concern on the matter, and the British had to send troops on their own in 1888 to clear the territories of the intruders, after inflicting heavy losses on them.

China considered Tibet as their dependency, and towards the

close of 1888 the Chinese Resident in Tibet arrived at Gangtok to negotiate a settlement. The Government of India showed no hesitation for the time being in negotiating some agreement with him. The Resident claimed that Sikkim was a dependency of Tibet, as proved by periodical presents and petitions which the ruler of Sikkim made to the Chinese and Tibetan officials at Lhasa. In the meanwhile, the Home authorities also sounded the Government of India, that maintenance of good terms with China and acceptance of some of their claims was desirable. But Lansdowne adopted a firm attitude that in such cases no claims of a foreign power beyond the Himalayas would be recognised. For, as H.M. Durand, the Foreign Secretary who was sent to negotiate with the Chinese Resident on behalf of India, said: "If we give way in respect of Sikkim we must be prepared to do so, at some future time, not only with regard to Bhutan and Nepal but with regard to Kashmir and its feudatories, such as Hunza and Nagar and with regard to any of the smaller Himalayan states."<sup>1</sup> Moreover the British having already expelled the Tibetan forces from Sikkim, were now in occupation of that state, and were in a position to assert the claims of a conqueror.

The negotiations started in such circumstance on 21 December 1888 broke down on 18 January 1889. The British in the meanwhile started administrative reorganisation of the state. In April 1889 the Chinese approached for the re opening of the issue. There were protracted discussions, and it was not before 17 March 1890 that Lansdowne signed a negotiated treaty on behalf of the British; the Chinese Resident signing it on behalf of Tibet and China.

The treaty known as the Treaty of Calcutta (1890) had two important clauses. The first clause dealt with Chinese recognition of the traditional boundary line between Tibet and Sikkim; while under the second clause China recognised that the British Government had "direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that state."<sup>2</sup>

After the treaty, an English officer was appointed at Gangtok to give political supervision to Sikkim, and a Council of five leading monks, and public men presided over by the Maharaja was set up to carry on the administration. The Maharaja, however, never agreed to rule with the advice of this Council. He remained at Robdenchi, never coming to Gangtok to preside over the Council meetings. On 16 March 1892 he tried to escape to Tibet via Nepal but was detained by the Nepalese authorities and taken to Darjeeling where he was put under house arrest. No further action against him was however taken, and all publicity was avoided.

1. See Misra, J.P., *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne (1888-1894)*, New Delhi, 1975, p.71.

2. *ibid.*, p. 73.

**Kashmir**

We have seen how after the treaty of 1846 the British steadily developed their hold on the Kashmir State by appointing an officer on Special Duty and agents at Leh and Gilgit. In 1885 they forced a Resident on Kashmir just when Maharaja Ranbir Singh died and his successor Maharaja Pratap Singh could not strongly resist. The Resident had been appointed ostensibly on the plea that the Kashmir administration during the illness of Ranbir Singh had sharply deteriorated and that unless the successor, Pratap Singh, was actively assisted by expert British advice the necessary administrative reforms could not be introduced. After the appointment of the Resident therefore an active interference in the administration began to be made. Men of their own choice were imposed on the Maharaja which did not leave much freedom with him to apply his mind to administration as he wished. There was delay, the British were irritated and being interested more in moulding the Kashmir administration so as to meet their Central Asian requirements, than in reforms themselves, they now thought that a free hand in the valley was possible only if the Maharaja was removed from the scene.

Luckily, in February 1889 the British Resident, Colonel Nisbet discovered a bunch of 34 letters in the Dogri language which Pratap Singh was alleged to have written to his favourites, and which made a mention of his wish to bring about the murders of his brothers Ram Singh and Amar Singh, of one of his own queens and of the British Resident himself. There was also a proposal in these letters to send a secret agent to Russia and to help Dalip Singh, the ex-Maharaja of Punjab, to come back and turn out the British. In vain did the Maharaja argue that if he had wished actually to intrigue against the British he was not foolish enough to commit himself in writing, that the return of Dalip Singh to the Punjab would be more dangerous to his own existence than to anybody else, and that there were even earlier instances where letters had been forged to implicate the ruling Kashmir princes. This was too good an opportunity for the British to forego. All types of threats were given to the Maharaja. He was told that the letters were authentic and that the only punishment for it could be his deposition. Lansdowne was determined to take over the whole administration and place it in the British hands. He was, however, afraid of the public opinion both in India and England, and therefore proceeded but cautiously.

On 8 August 1889 Maharaja Pratap Singh issued an *Irshad*. It was written in Persian and addressed to his brother, Raja Amar Singh. In this *Irshad* he offered to entrust the whole administration to a Council consisting of the Rajas Amar Singh and Ram Singh and an experienced European officer appointed with the consultation of the Government of India. This Council would run the

administration for five years for which period he would completely step down from power, provided that there would be no interference with his private life and he would continue getting such funds as necessary for his own expense and for the palace, etc. The Maharaja was said to have issued this *Irshad* at his own initiative and out of his free will, but Pratap Singh denied this and insisted that it had been got signed by him under "great and many-sided pressure." In such a circumstance one cannot forget the Treaty of Bhairawal which the British imposed on the Punjab after the First Sikh War. The way it was extracted from the unwilling Sardars, yet ostensibly signed by them willingly and at their own initiative, was an excellent commentary on this *Irshad* and how it could be secured.

Be that as it may, the Maharaja renounced all his claims on administration for five years. The Government could not prove the authenticity of the treasonable letters, yet basing their decision on them, on the *Irshad*, and on the administrative inefficiency, they decided to remove the Maharaja from power at his own terms but not for five years. The Lansdowne Government decided to remove the Maharaja till further orders. He was informed. "That for a time at least he will be expected to restrain from all interference in the administration. He will retain his rank and dignity as Chief of the State; but full powers of Government will be vested in a Council consisting of the Maharaja's brothers and three or four officials selected by the Government of India. It is not thought desirable that one of these officers should be an Englishman."<sup>1</sup> The Council however was to be under the final supervision of the Resident. The Council was duly instituted and the Maharaja was virtually deposed. In its very first meeting on 18 April 1889 the Council declared: "The Resident shall be the final referee in all matters and may veto any resolution passed by the Council or suspend action thereon pending further explanation."<sup>2</sup> No English officer was inducted in the Council, yet the administration began virtually to be run by an Englishman.

This virtual deposition of the Maharaja was a subject of great public criticism. The contemporary Press opinion is of interest. *The Hindu Patriot* thus aptly remarked: "If truth must be told, its (Kashmir's) strategic position is fatal to its being retained as an independent or even a tributary state." *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and many other newspapers commented in this vein. William Digby wrote a lengthy letter to *The Times* criticising the Government action. Bradlaugh, an influential member of the British House of Commons called Kashmir as "virtually" annexed, putting the "ruler to great indignities." Even Lansdowne in a letter to the Secretary of State admitted that the objectionable letter could have been forged

1. Quoted, Kapoor, M.L., *Kashmir Sold and Snatched*, p. 166.

2. *ibid.*, p. 168.

particularly when Pratap Singh's younger brothers Ram Singh and Amar Singh were not well disposed towards him, and were "at different times in the habit of supplying the Resident with secret information." The Maharaja was punished without an enquiry into the allegation that his younger brothers had entered into a conspiracy against him. Instead of punishing them, Ram Singh was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the State forces and Amar Singh President of the newly instituted Council. India's Foreign Secretary Durand did not consider it wise on the part of the Resident to have "made a scandal about the letters." And even Lansdowne after having later on personally met the Maharaja remarked: "I have found him a much more sensible and intelligent man than I had been led to expect." In 1890 the Viceroy removed the Resident Nisbet from his office, for, he wrote to the Secretary of State, he (Nisbet) "had done a great number of foolish things."

Whatever the merit of the case, Lansdowne was determined not to lose this opportunity. He remarked: "We certainly jumped down his throat very sharply and the opportunity of setting the affairs of of the State right was no doubt too good a one to be lost."<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja, however, remained popular with the people. The newly appointed Council also could not accomplish much, and in 1891 the first step towards the restoration of his power was taken when the Maharaja was appointed President of the State Council. The Resident's supremacy, however, still remained intact, and the complete restoration of powers to the Maharaja was still a long way off.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

### Afghanistan

The cordial relations of Lord Dufferin with Abdur Rehman could not be continued in the time of Lord Lansdowne. That was due to a change in the British foreign policy towards the forward direction, for which there were certain reasons. There was a belt of about 25,000 square miles of territory between the Afghan and the British administered territories which we will have an opportunity of touching upon once again in the following pages. This territory was inhabited by some of the fiercest tribes of the world, over whom the Amir had but little lasting control, but who could still be aroused by him against the British thus creating troubles while himself remaining behind. The members of these tribes often violated the British frontiers and carried their predatory raids far into the British territories. Punitive expeditions were sent against them from time to time, but they could have

1. See Misra, J.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 74-83.

no lasting effect; till ultimately in the time of Lord Lansdowne the 'Forward School' which insisted upon a definite control over these tribes, extension of strategic railways and a clear demarcation of the boundary line between India and Afghanistan, began to gather strength. If this policy were carried out, it was bound to strain British relations with the Amir who, naturally enough, was jealous of any British interference in these territories. Nor was the cost of following this policy small. It was towards this that some cautious steps were taken by Lord Roberts (General Roberts of the Second Afghan War), the then Commander-in-Chief, a believer in the Forward Policy. Besides completing a strategic railway right up to the Bolan Pass, an unusual activity was shown along the frontier from Kashmir to Quetta which alarmed the Amir.

Maharaja Pratap Singh who had succeeded to the Kashmir throne in 1885, was not looked upon favourably by Lord Lansdowne who, on certain vague charges of inefficient administration and other such reasons as we have already seen, took over the charge of his government in 1889, and handed it over to a council controlled by the British Resident. There was a possibility of annexation of the valley by Lansdowne, when his policy was strongly criticised in the British Parliament, which ultimately led to the restoration of the Maharaja in 1905. A British officer was sent to Gilgit in 1889, due to an exaggerated fear of the Russian aggression. The presence of this officer in Gilgit was not liked by two small chiefs of Hunza and Nagar who owned a loose allegiance to Kashmir. Gilgit was attacked by them, they were duly defeated and given punishment. From Gilgit there was a direct route to Chitral, a small state commanding the best passes across the Hindu Kush. The Chief of Chitral dying in 1892, was succeeded by a son who faced some difficulties in securing full powers, which gave an excuse for sending a British envoy, Dr Robertson, to that state. All these activities on the frontier line, coupled with construction of the strategic railway up to the Bolan Pass, as above referred to, alarmed the Amir so much so that the war clouds between India and Afghanistan began once again to hang low. Fortunately, however, the clash was avoided.

Every assurance was given to the Amir regarding good intentions of the British towards Afghanistan. In 1892 Lansdowne proposed to send a mission under Lord Roberts to Afghanistan, to settle the differences. But the latter being an exponent of the Forward Policy, the Amir excused himself from receiving him and later on expressed his readiness to receive Sir Mortimer Durand instead. Durand was sent, who was well received and was able to secure an important agreement with the Amir. The agreement known as The Durand Agreement was signed in 1893, by which the Amir bound himself not to interfere with the Waziris, the Afridis and the other frontier tribes henceforth. The British and Afghan commissioners would be appointed to demarcate the boundary line where possible. The Amir

engaged himself further not to interfere in Chitral, Dir, Swát and Bajur, and the British ceded to him certain districts. The Amir renounced his claims to the Chaman railway station, and the British permitted him to purchase and import munitions of war through India. His subsidy was raised from 12 lakhs of rupees to 18 lakhs a year. And thus Lansdowne was able to re-establish friendly relations with the Amir before he laid down his office in 1893.

The Amir himself remarked : "Sir Mortimer Durand's mission reconciled matters by giving me some sort of compensation, and I am quite contented and satisfied that I have gained more than I have lost by British friendship." And these friendly relations continued till the Amir was disappointed in 1895, when his request to be directly represented at the Court of St. James was rejected.

### **The Pamir Dispute**

The 1887 protocol signed at St. Petersburg had demarcated the Russo-Afghan boundary upto Khoja Saleh. From this place to Lake Victoria the line was determined by the unwritten agreement of 1873 which was still under dispute because of the claims and the counter-claims of territories on either side of the border. East of the Lake Victoria across the Pamirs there was complete confusion. Here there was a big gap between the Afghan and the Chinese territories which could almost be called no-man's-land. This was an area which was inhabited by a wandering population. The greatest anxiety of the British here was to keep the fact from the Russians lest they should try to occupy this gap and come close to the frontier tribes of India which could easily be inflamed.

These are the areas where no grain grows, and where water supply is extremely difficult. Even at places like Gilgit, nearer home, the supplies came entirely from Kashmir. Any Russian invasion from this side was not therefore easy. Still no one could deny that the Russian moves on this side could detract the British and keep them busy when their attention was needed in Europe. Obviously, therefore, the British would never like that the Russians should infiltrate into these areas. But like the British the Russian explorers also had been busy in these territories for quite sometime and as early as 1880 an official publication at St. Petersburg declared : "The extent of country between the most southern portion of the province of Fergana and the (Darkot) Pass...lies in the Pamirs and belongs to no one...this belt of no-man's-land must probably, sooner or later be included in Russian dominions, which will thus be in immediate contact with the range forming the water-parting from the Indus".<sup>1</sup> A map prepared by Gromchevsky marked this line in red. This came to the notice of the British in 1889 and they got anxious that this gap should either be

1. Quoted, Alder, G.J., *British India's Northern Frontier, 1865-1895*, p. 220.



filled up by Afghanistan or by China so that it does not fall into the Russian hands. Efforts were made in 1891 to persuade the Chinese authorities at Kashgar to send their armed parties to establish claims on the Pamirs. But to the utter astonishment of the British they later on discovered that a secret exchange of views with the Chinese to this effect was intimated by the Chinese themselves to the Russians and provided them with an opportunity to occupy these areas before the Chinese reached even half-way.

Younghusband, a British officer who had gone for explorations to the Pamirs suddenly ran into a Russian party at Bozai Gumbaz on 13 August 1881. Leader of the party, Colonel Ianov, to the surprise of the British officer, told him that the Russians had annexed both the great and the Little Pamirs including all the places like Tagdumbash, Rang kul and Aksu valley. Lieutenant Davison who had gone to Somatash, the post where the British had sometime back supported the Chinese claims against those of Afghanistan, was accused by the Russians as having trespassed on their territory and was taken prisoner. The Russians did not confine their activities here alone. They added insult to the injury when from Bozai Gumbaz they explored their way on to the Darkot Pass returning by the Baroghil in the Hindukush to the Afghan Wakhan and thence to Bozai. Their violation of the Afghan Wakhan was indeed something serious. Nor could their crossing of the Hindukush which the British considered as the limit of their influence be considered as something less stunning. The Russians had not confined themselves only to the explorations in these territories. While doing so they had made every effort to foment trouble in the tribal territories of Chitral and its neighbourhood, which were subsidised by the British and which they definitely supposed to be under their political influence. From Bozai, Hunza was only at a distance of a few hours journey. And the Russian control of the Little Pamir could throttle the Kashghar-Wakhan trade route also.

The Russian presence in the Pamirs was something which the British could not easily swallow. At the same time, however, they could not deny the fact that the lands from where the British officer had been expelled did not belong to anybody. In vain did they inform the Russian authorities that Bozai where their officer had been humiliated belonged to the Afghan Wakhan, for shortly after they had to withdraw this claim and assert that if the place did not belong to the Afghans it must be considered a Chinese territory. But China had never claimed it, nor was she anxious to extend hold even if these territories were offered to her.

The situation in the Pamirs was indeed difficult. The British themselves did not want to go so far as to occupy the Pamirs, but at the same time they were anxious not to permit these territories to fall into the Russian hands. The question was, to whom did these

lands belong? If they were to be neutralised, who would guarantee their neutrality. The Russians claimed that the Pamirs belonged to them on the basis of the rights that Khokand had earlier enjoyed over them. In vain did the British dig extensively into their records. They could find no arguments to support their case, till they suddenly discovered that on 22 May 1884 Russia had signed a Protocol with China, the third clause of which stated : " This valley (Uzbel) is the terminus of the boundary line of the two countries, the Russian boundary turning south-west, and the Chinese boundary due South."<sup>1</sup> This made it clear that at least in 1884 the Russians did not consider the territories under dispute their own.

The discovery by the British of the existence of this Protocol was a shock to the Russians. When making use of it the British attacked the Russian claims on the Pamirs and protested against the insult of their officers at their hands, the Russians began to consider their case weak. This made the British yet more bold and they declared in December 1891 "... The northern slopes of that range (the Hindu-kush) formed, as it were, the glacis of the fortress and to suppose that we should allow a powerful and rival nation to effect a lodgement on this glacis, and that in the free and easy manner contemplated by Colonel Ianov was not a wise proceeding...(and would lead to) very great trouble."<sup>2</sup> There was a lengthy correspondence between the two Governments and ultimately the Russians had to agree that the action of their officer was illegal and therefore regrettable. The whole matter was closed after a full apology from Russia and a suggestion that after a joint topographical survey a delimitation of the territories may be made.

This declaration of the Russians, however, was not the final word. There were differences between the Russian War and Foreign Ministries, the former being more aggressive in its claims on the Pamir mountains. The ink on the apology document was not yet dry when the Russians decided to occupy the Pamirs and come as near the Hindukush Passes as they could so that when a joint Delimitation Commission met they would be in a strong bargaining position. The old Ianov claims began again to be forwarded and the Russians seemed to be determined to take advantage of Salisbury's difficulties and political crisis in England. The big gap between Afghanistan and China stared the British in their face. Their efforts to persuade either China or Afghanistan to claim it failed. They themselves did not find the mountains worth a war. But still they were anxious that the Russian claims should not be permitted and Dardistan should be kept as safe from foreign interference as possible. Rumours were afloat of active Russian presence in the Pamir areas, but the British kept their fingers crossed, repeatedly

1. *ibid.*, p. 243.

2. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 244.

referring to the joint delimitation decision and pinning their hopes to it.

There was a further correspondence and in 1893 the British were informed that the Russian frontier was not the Lake Victoria but the line of the Wakhansu to the south of it. Lansdowne's Government in India and the Home authorities on the other hand insisted on the 1773 line with necessary adjustments upto Lake Victoria and from there a straight line to the East upto the Chinese frontiers. A heated argument restarted. The British now prepared even to go to a war with regard to their claims on the line east of the Lake Victoria, but at the same time they were prepared to humour Russia by giving her concession on the trans-Oxus Shignan and Roshan over which Afghanistan laid her claims. This concession if agreeable to Russia would probably alienate Amir Abdur-Rehman. Lord Lansdowne sent his Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand to Kabul to sound the Amir's views. There were lengthy discussions. Ultimately, however, by giving some concessions on the Indo-Afghan frontiers, Durand was able to persuade the Amir to renounce his trans-Oxus claims and recognise the 1873 boundary, as decided between England and Russia. This was probably enough to save face and the Russians also ultimately agreed to it. On 7 December 1893 a definite communication was received from Russia that they agreed to the line east of Lake Victoria as far as the Chinese frontier.

This was a great diplomatic victory for the British. Russian claims on this big gap of no-man's-land ceased to exist, but there was a question, to whom should the territory between the accepted line and the Hindukush belong, so that Russia is not able to lay her claims any more? This problem was also ultimately solved when finally in the time of Lord Elgin in March 1895 a formal agreement with Russia was reached. Under this agreement it was decided that the Russian boundary from Lake Victoria was to the east upto the Chinese frontier and that between this line and the Hindukush the territories (which previously belonged to no one) now belonged to Afghanistan.

This question was thus decided. There was the problem of filling up two more gaps between China and Ladakh and between China and Afghanistan on the Pamirs. The Kashmir maps showed their boundary running along the Yarkand river while the Chinese after their reoccupation of Sinkiang in 1878 claimed their territories only upto the passes of Kilian, Kogyar and Sanju. The intervening territory of Kuen-lun was claimed by none. The British were anxious that China should extend her claim right upto the Kashmir boundaries so that Russia does not find yet another place to infiltrate close to the territories in the British sphere of influence. In 1889 Younghusband visited these areas claimed by none. His activities there, however, soon alarmed the Chinese at Kashgar and to the pleasant surprise

of the British they protested against Younghusband's presence among the people who acknowledged Chinese suzerainty. Chinese claims were encouraged and recognised, and in 1890 Lansdowne's Government instructed their officials in Kashmir to consider the Karakoram watershed as the northern limit of the Kashmir territory and southern boundary of China. In 1892, China was found erecting her boundary pillars on the agreed line and the British were happy that one problem was solved.

The gap between China and Afghanistan on the Pamirs was the other problem. But this was also solved by the final Anglo-Russian agreement of 1895 by which Russia agreed to extend the line east of Lake Victoria right upto the *defacto* Chinese frontier. Although actual topographical surveys on the basis of these decisions on paper created some serious difficulties and the British did not find it easy to reconcile their armchair claims to the actual physical existence, yet the paper decisions held good, and the 1895 agreement solved one of the thorniest problems. Despite "all the alarms, the 1873 line running from the Kokcha junction along the Oxus to Lake Victoria, which was in 1895 confirmed and continued eastwards across the Pamirs to the Chinese frontier, has remained unaltered ever since. Today it marks the southern limit of the Soviet Central Asian Empire, and its nearest approach to the political frontiers of the Indian subcontinent."<sup>1</sup>

### Dardistan

Lord Lansdowne belonged to the 'Forward School.' The Forward policy started by Lytton continued through the time of Dufferin, and Lord Lansdowne was anxious to bring it to consummation when he declared "I am much impressed with the necessity of 'assimilating' the frontier tribes as rapidly as possible." Again: "Recent events... have rendered it absolutely necessary to abandon the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the frontier tribes."<sup>2</sup> Whitehall approved these views. Gomal was therefore opened up, Quetta fortified, and by 1892 Bolan had a railway line running through it. Gilgit Agency had already been re-established. All these hectic activities naturally roused the suspicions of Kabul, but the people in Dardistan were more exercised. The newly announced annexationist policy could not remain a secret, and the tribal people began to plan and develop alliances between them to resist any British onslaught.

Durand's visit at Hunza and Nagar in 1889 and the information received from these states thereafter convinced the British that

1. See for details Alder G.J., *op. cit.*, pp. 206-287; Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, pp. 140-206.
2. Quoted, *ibid.*, pp. 208-209.

disaffection prevailed and the refractory attitude of these chiefs could not be corrected without punishment. Safdar Ali, the Chief of Hunza particularly caused concern. The Russian officers Gromchevsky twice visited this state. A French explorer, Dauvergne was also exhibiting an extraordinary interest in it. A Hunzakut mission visited Kashgar and there were rumours of Safdar Ali's correspondence with the Russian Governor-General at Osh. The Russian presence on the Pamirs had already alarmed the British and there was a danger that a Russian force may be introduced into Hunza which was not very far away from Gilgit. The special interest that China started exhibiting in Hunza from early 1890 also could not be ignored. For sometime an exchange of gifts between Hunza and Kashgar had been going on. Now all of a sudden China started claiming that these gifts were in fact a tribute, and the British had no right to send any envoy or troops into their tributary state. In 1890 the two states of Hunza and Nagar concluded an agreement to resist any improvement of the road which ran to the forts of Chalt and Chakrot already under the British occupation. "These two forts" as Safdar Ali remarked, were "more precious to us than the strings of our wives' pyjamas."

By the year 1891 there were rumours that yet another effort would be made by these tribal people to occupy the forts. In May Durand suddenly marched from Gilgit and forestalled Uzr Khan the Nagar chief at Chalt, but he was sure that this success of the British had given them only a respite. In December 1891 a regular expedition had to be fitted out to punish the two chiefs. Safdar Ali and Uzr Khan fled before the British, and calm was once again restored. The British success was extraordinary, for these two states remained peaceful even during the Chitral crisis of 1895 and the general disturbances in Dardistan of 1897.

Hunza campaign, however, estranged China, and they demanded an explanation of the British presence in their tributary state. The British, because of the Russian presence on the Pamirs, were too anxious not to alienate Peking, and at the suggestion of Lansdowne a settlement was ultimately made which while maintaining the political supremacy of Kashmir recognised special Chinese interest in Hunza.

A similar trouble developed in Chilas which flanked Gilgit and the friendship of which was necessary to keep the Gilgit route safe. The Chilas made an attempt to murder the Kashmir representative in their territories. A small community of Gor on the right bank of the Indus, requested the British in 1891 for protection against Chilas opposite that river. This was too good an opportunity to miss. A small force was despatched to Gor and the Chilas fort was occupied, where Kashmir imperial service troops were left to garrison. An attack of over a thousand tribesmen on Chilas in March 1893 was

easily repulsed and the Kashmir troops continued their occupation of the fort.

A more serious problem, however, was created by Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral and Umra Khan of Jandul. The Jandul friendship was necessary because of the short route which lay through it to Chitral. Chitral had to be humoured to keep the northern passes safe. Amir Abdul Rehman had certain territorial designs on Jandul which the British had to check. But at the same time the Amir also could not be alienated, for on him depended not only the safety of the northern passes but also of the whole of the north-west frontier. The mutual clashes of these chiefs, put the Lansdowne government in a dilemma.

The situation on the frontier about the year 1892 was tense. Yet peace somehow was kept till, in August 1892 Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral suddenly died. Aman had nominated his son, Nizam-ul-Mulk as his successor, but another brother Afzal-ul-Mulk captured the throne and Nizam fled to take refuge at Gilgit. The British did not think it proper to interfere and gave their recognition to Afzal. But Afzal himself was not destined to rule for long. He was suddenly attacked and killed by his uncle Sher Afzal. The continuous anarchy in Chitral was too dangerous for the British who were afraid lest the Russians on the Pamirs may be tempted to intervene. Durand, the British Agent at Gilgit, thought in these circumstances an immediate action was necessary. Without wasting time to seek sanction from the Viceroy he marched with his troops into Chitral. Afzal fled to Afghanistan and Nizam was placed on the throne once again. The new ruler was promised a subsidy in return for a commitment to watch the Russian activities in his neighbourhood and keep the British informed. He also agreed to receive British officers whenever necessary. He himself, however, was unpopular among his people and the whole political situation in the state continued to be as unsatisfactory as it previously was. Activities of Sher Afzal in Afghanistan had to be watched, and Umra Khan's loyalty also could not be relied upon. Yet, however, peace continued for sometime, and in 1894 before Lord Lansdowne left India, instructions had been issued that the British troops should soon be withdrawn both from Chilas and Chitral. Lansdowne's successor Lord Elgin also agreed to this policy, and an announcement for a reduction of the Gilgit garrison was also made.

Before, however, the British withdrew from their advanced positions in Dardistan, they wanted finally to dispose of the danger of the Russian presence on the Pamirs. This problem having been solved in 1895, an ultimate withdrawal from Chitral was authorised, but before the British troops actually left, the events took a sharp turn. On 14 March, only three days after the Pamir settlement with Russia, the mobilisation of 15,000 troops had to be

ordered to relieve the small British force which had suddenly been besieged at Chitral. This happened when Nizam-ul-Mulk was murdered by his brother Amir-ul-Mulk. Sher Afzal who enjoyed popular support in Chitral marched from Afghanistan. Umra Khan suddenly appeared from the southern side of Chitral and the Chitral fort was surrounded. ,

Chitral, a small state of the size of Wales, lying at a distance of 200 miles from Peshawar, hemmed in by mighty mountains rising upto the height of 20,000 feet, and inhabited by about 80,000 people of mixed races, Muslim, but non-Pathan of unknown origin, became a problem. Its strategic importance lay in the fact that it was only 47 miles away from the great Hindukush watershed from which the waters flowed down into the Oxus on the one side and to India on the other. It had to be guarded against the Russian ambitions which had given many a sleepless night to the British in the recent years.

The British garrison of 400 men under the command of Robertson was surrounded by the tribal forces under Sher Afzal and Umra Khan. Robertson was warned to evacuate the fort or face the consequences. Repeated attacks were made but despite the heavy odds Robertson held his ground. Messages for relief were flashed. The troops marched both from Nowshera under Sir Robert Low and from Gilgit under Colonel G.J. Kelly. Low fought his way through the three passes of Mora, Shahkot and Malkand in order to open the road from Malkand into the Swat valley. At Malkand, 2,000 tribesmen had to be killed and 10,000 of them dispersed. Low marched across the Swat and Panjkora rivers. The Khan of Dir gave every help. Umra Khan's fortress at Munda was captured and the chief himself made to flee across to Afghanistan. Kelly also covered 220 miles negotiating his way through high mountains, numerous defiles and rivers. And Robertson was relieved just when he and his men were on the verge of starvation. Peace was once again restored in Chitral, and a small boy, Shuja-ul-Mulk, made its ruler.

Now once again there was the question whether after such sacrifices the forces from Chitral should be withdrawn or should continue to stay. Lord Elgin favoured the latter course, and he also suggested that Chitral could not easily be defended from the side of Gilgit. It was proposed that the Dir road be opened up permanently and it should be guarded by levies all along its length. If the British abandoned Chitral it would be a blow to their prestige and would encourage the Afghan intrigues in the area. The whole question was re-examined and Elgin sent his views to the Liberal Government in England. The British Government, however did not agree that after the Pamir settlement there was a need to retain the British troops in Chitral at all. The instructions were, therefore, given once again to withdraw.



But before the withdrawal actually took place the situation took yet another turn. Just in June 1895 the Liberal Government had rejected Elgin's proposals and in August they themselves were replaced by the Conservatives resulting in an impetus being given to the forward policy once again. Lord Curzon who belonged to the 'Forward School' declared : "If you agree upon a boundary with a great Power, one party cannot run away from its side; both parties must occupy, or must at any rate exert their influence upto the limit of their boundary."<sup>1</sup> This means, after the Pamir Settlement with Russia the British withdrawal from Chitral was not considered advisable, and the Chitral settlement made in 1895 remained unchanged.

Lansdowne finally left for England in 1894, was appointed Secretary of State for War by Lord Salisbury in 1895, and made Foreign Secretary in 1900. Lansdowne's important work while in the Foreign Office was the Japanese Alliance of 1902 and the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. In 1903 he became Conservative Leader of the House of Lords, became a Minister without Portfolio during the First World War and died suddenly in 1927 when he was 82 years of age.

1. Alder, G.J., p. 297; Swinson Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, pp. 207-231.

## Earl of Elgin, 1894-1899

Eldest son of James Bruce, the 8th Earl of Elgin by Mary Louisa Lambdon, the daughter of First Earl of Durham, Victor Alexander Bruce was born on 16 May 1849. He was educated at Glenalmond and Eton and succeeded to his father's titles in 1863. After his education he started taking interest in Liberal politics and became President of the Scottish Liberal Association. He married Constance Mary, a daughter of the 9th Earl of Southesk in 1876. In 1886 Gladstone during his short term of office appointed him Treasurer of the Household and when in 1892 the Liberals came to power, Elgin was offered the Viceroyalty of India.

### INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

Lord Elgin arrived in India in 1894, and his period of administration has been described as one of the most calamitous periods of the Indian history. His viceroyalty witnessed famine of the worst type, coupled with bubonic plague, frontier wars and falling value of Indian rupee. People groaned and suffered, and the government did its best, but was misunderstood. Only a brief study of all this may here be made.

In the very first year of Elgin's arrival in this country, a serious deficit stared him in the face. The old general duty of five per cent was reimposed on all imported goods except those of cotton. But the problem still defied a settlement, with the result that the cotton goods too had at the end of the year to be pressed into the tariff. All this was not however done to protect the Indian commodities and alienate the interests of Manchester. A corresponding countervailing excise duty was also imposed on the manufactures of the Indian mills, under which the Indian manufacturers suffered more heavily than anybody else. The rupee continued falling in its value till 1895, after which it showed signs of recovery, till it reached the value of one shilling and

four pence where it was maintained. The next year the import as well as the excise duties above referred to were reduced to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, and the financial problem was thus for a time solved.

In 1896-97, there was a grave failure of rains which left about 225,000 square miles of area dry in the British India alone. About 62 million people were victims of starvation and death. Of this about 125,000 square miles of area and 32 million people were more severely distressed. The Government undertook measures to remit revenue and distribute relief, which cost them as much as  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million sterling. Still, however, the loss of human life was very great. A Commission under Sir James Lyall, the ex-Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, was appointed for enquiries.

About the same time as the famine ravaged the country, bubonic plague perhaps brought from Hong Kong by infected rats on grain ships, made its ugly appearance in Bombay. Appearing in the autumn of 1896, by February 1897 it resulted in more than a quarter million of the inhabitants leaving the city. The Government took strong measures to control and check the disease. Inoculation, disinfection, inspection of houses, segregation, etc. were immediately planned and put into practice. Such vigorous measures of the Government aroused public protests. They felt that the disease was a mischief of the alien Government itself, and resented the violation of their privacy by the Government agents. In 1897, two British officers were murdered at Poona while engaged in plague work, while in March 1898, people in Bombay broke out in serious riots. The vernacular papers raised a cry against the Government activities, while the latter instead of understanding the people, became more stubborn and made the law against the seditious publications more stringent. It was only later on in 1898 that the Government understood their folly and feeling that the grievances of the people were genuine and not inspired from ignorance, and therefore introduced mildness in action which actually produced better results.

The rest of Lord Elgin's activities deserve only a passing reference. In 1895, a reform was introduced in the army. In place of three Commanders-in-Chief for the three Presidencies as under the old system, one Commander-in-Chief to be assisted by four Lieutenant-Generals, one each for the forces in Bombay, Madras, Bengal and Punjab and the North-West Provinces combined, was appointed. The greatest merit of this, besides an administrative reform, was the recognition of the unity of India.

Another action of Lord Elgin related to the preparation of opium in this country under State monopoly. There was a lot of agitation against it which termed the Government's profits from this source as immoral, and desired the sale of opium to be restricted only to medicinal purposes. The Commission appointed in 1893, by an Act of

Parliament, submitted its report on the subject in 1895, in which it expressed itself against the agitators, saying that it was for China to take the action if that country desired to curb the opium import from India, and that it would be very difficult at the time of the Indian Government to surrender this source of revenue. The anti-opium agitators, however, were not satisfied and they continued their fight which ultimately bore its fruit, though much after Lord Elgin retired from this country.

### **The Pathan Revolt**

The forward policy in Dardistan started by Lytton was brought to consummation in the time of Lords Lansdowne and Elgin. The policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the frontier tribes was renounced and their active 'assimilation' began rapidly to be made. But the fruit that the policy bore, as it was soon to be seen, were bitter. The so-called British betrayal of Turkey in the war between Greece and that state made Sultan Abdul Hamid II furious. The Amir at Kabul also was not happy with the Durand Line. The war-like activities of the British so close to the Afghan frontiers aroused the Amir's suspicions yet further, and he began to fear British aggressions in Afghanistan itself.

Little wonder that the agents both of the Amir and the Sultan soon appeared in the Dardistan and inflammatory rumours began to be fed into the hostile years of the fanatic mullahs. One of them "the Mad Mullah" or "the Mullah of Swat" suddenly rose to prominence in July 1897. Wild rumours were spread with regard to the fantastic power which he was supposed to possess. He moved from village to village accompanied by a 13-year old boy whom he considered "the sole surviving heir to the throne of Delhi." This Mullah was in touch with some other fanatics also, notably Mullah Powindah of Waziristan and the Mullah of Hadda. There was much propaganda among the ignorant people and it was given out that the Mullah of Swat would sweep the British from their posts at Chakdara and Malkand in no time. Thousands thronged round him and awaited with swords and rifles, the signal to advance. The calm that had been restored in Dardistan in 1895 was suddenly broken in 1897. The forward policy indeed was showing its effects. The 'Forward School' people had to pay a heavy price for reversing the Liberals' policy on the frontiers. Elgin's policy of remaining at Chitral, of pushing through the road via Dir, of paying heavy subsidies to the tribal chiefs could work but only for two years.

Fresh expeditions had to be despatched to restore order among the Afridis, Swatis, Bunerwans, Utman Khels, Mohmands, and Salarzais. The British suffered heavy losses at Landi Kotal and on the Dargai heights. Thousands of the tribal people were butchered. As many as 50,000 troops spread over the disturbed areas and burnt

village after village, destroying houses, crops and everything that came their way. Peace was again restored.

The disturbances of 1897 triggered off yet another round of discussions as to whether the 'Forward Policy' was good or bad. "Was there any sense, people began to ask, in trying to administer the Pathans of the plains as if they were Europeans, while the Pathans in the hills remained in the primitive tribal state? Was it any use disarming the former so that the latter could come down out of the hills to loot and plunder? Was the British judicial system, with what Sir Olaf Caroe has called "its lawyers and its appeals and its European crime scale of values," doing any good whatsoever in the administered areas? "Its main effect was to emphasise the charms of the freer life up in the hills."<sup>1</sup> The whole policy of paying subsidies and allowances which were called *Muwajib* but which were termed by the critics as 'a term of disguised blackmail' came under fire. The recent disturbances had cost the British seven million pounds and not less than 800 casualties which the English troops suffered. Was the retention of the frontiers under active British administration at such heavy costs necessary at all? Roberts who had by now returned to England and opened the discussions on the 'Forward Policy' in the House of Lords in 1898. He justified it by saying that it "is necessitated by the inconvertible fact that a great Military Power is now within striking distance of our Indian possessions, and in immediate contact with State for the integrity of which we have made ourselves responsible."<sup>2</sup> But despite his vast experience, this grand old soldier seemed to be out of touch with reality. Despite the long British contact with the frontier people since 1849 they had still not been able to understand the tribal character.

So "perverse were the emotions raised in the House at the very mention of the North-West Frontier, that logic and reality had little currency. The 'Forward Policy' won the day." And within a year it was announced that the greatest of all the Russophobists, the arch-disciple of Sir Henry Rawlinson, was to proceed to India as Viceroy. He was 39 years old and his name was George Nathaniel Curzon. He was the most extraordinary man ever to hold that high office.<sup>3</sup>

Elgin retired from India in 1899 when he was made Knight of the Garter. Shortly after he was appointed Chairman of two Royal

1. Swinson, Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

2. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 253.

3. *ibid.*, p. 254.

Commissions one after another, and in 1905 he was made Colonial Secretary in the Liberal Ministry, when Winston Churchill worked under him as Under-Secretary. His wife having died in 1910, he married another lady, Gertrude Lilian in 1913, who was widow of an army officer. He enjoyed several other positions of distinction before he died at the age of 68 in 1917.

# 19

## George Nathaniel Curzon, 1899-1905

Known for his eloquence and industrious habits, Baron Curzon of Kedleston was born in 1859. Due to his high birth and aristocratic connections, it is said, he suffered from a superiority complex right from his childhood. At Oxford where he was educated, his colleagues said the following regarding him :

*"My name is George Nathaniel Curzon  
I am a most superior person  
My cheek is pink, my hair is sleek  
I dine at Blenheim, once a week."*

At the young age of 27, in 1886, he became a member of Parliament, and gathered a large experience and knowledge regarding the Asian and the Indian problems. He worked as Under Secretary of State for India for quite some time, and visited India four times, travelling widely in this country. He had written three very important books on the Asian problems, had met a singular variety of high Asiatic rulers gathering information regarding their countries and problems, and had gathered a first hand knowledge of the North-West Frontier of India before he came in this country as Governor-General. His appointment was announced in August 1898, and he made his State entry into Calcutta in January 1899. "The opportunity of which he had dreamed in secret had come at last," writes Frazer.<sup>1</sup>

There were different comments regarding his new appointment in India, some in his favour and some against. *Daily Graphic* for instance wrote that the Government and the people of India "would very greatly benefit by it". But according to the *Liverpool Mercury*, he had "many of the defects of the youthful temperament." And the *Saturday Review* wrote that his "restlessness and conceit" would "bring us into trouble in India."<sup>2</sup>

1. Frazer, Lovat, *India under Lord Curzon and After*, 1911.
2. Ronaldshay, Earl of, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, II, p. 295.



## THE INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

Besides the North-West Frontier problem and the problems connected with agriculture, irrigation, railway, police, education, the popular political disaffection etc., the most important legacy of Curzon in India was the plague and famine, due to which the ill-fitted old bureaucracy "presented the Administration with a new and baffling problem, demanding urgent and drastic treatment."<sup>1</sup>

It was in August 1896 that it was confirmed that the city of Bombay was infected by the bubonic plague. That was the time when the facts regarding this disease were known neither to the people nor to the Government; it being established only in 1905 as a result of the findings of the Indian Plague Commission that the disease was carried by rat-flea, *Pulex cheopis*, and had been brought by rats on ships from Hong Kong in 1896. The disease having mostly spread among the Indians, they believed that it had been brought by the Europeans. Their beliefs were further confirmed when in their ignorance regarding the disease, yet in honest anxiousness that its spread should be checked, the Bombay Government of Lord Sandhurst carried on ruthless measures to combat it. The evacuation of the infected areas, and the disinfection, quarantine and inspection of the private dwellings that was carried in a ruthless manner, created rather an unrest among the people and a resentment that their privacy was being violated, and the 'izzat' of their females was being put in danger. The bitterness among the people intensified with the intensification of the anti-plague measures. The Hindus as well as the Muslims were aroused. In March 1898 there was the Muslim weavers riot in Bombay which led many of them to be shot down by police. Two British officers, Lieutenant Ayerst and Rand, who were on special plague duty, were murdered. Yet the disease spread from Bombay to the other parts of the country and the census of 1911 showed that over eight million people had died in the country because of this bubonic plague.

And then plague was not alone in bringing misery to the people. There was famine after plague and plague after famine, influenza and malaria being the natural visitants to follow. India in fact was a land of woes between 1896 and 1900, and the people suffered in crores and died in lakhs. There was a widespread failure of rain during 1896-97 all over India, except in Bengal. A commission had been appointed under Sir James Lyall, but before the Government had time to consider its recommendations, a drought visited the country which was said to be the "greatest in extent and intensity which she had experienced in the last two hundred years." The famine of 1899-1900 closely followed that of 1896-97, and more than four lakh square miles of territory belonging both to British India and the

1. Ronaldsday, Earl of, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, II, p. 291.

Indian states was in distress. Gujarat and Baroda suffered the most. There being a real food famine, and not a mere work famine, the few railway lines which had been laid more for strategical considerations and less for the economic and the social benefits of the people, failed to deliver the goods. There was a failure of water supply, and there was a failure of food, fodder and everything that could fill the stomach of men, women and animals. People died in hundreds and thousands, but the Government looked on helplessly or carelessly or what is yet worse, peevishly and foolishly. The famine administration being primarily a provincial concern, some of the provinces acted in an extravagant manner, while others acted too parsimoniously. Some were quick, while others too slow. The principles of the Famine Codes of 1883 were nowhere followed diligently or honestly. Lord Curzon's tours of the affected areas focused the world attention on India, and the Indian government was criticised for their responsibility in these catastrophes. Many critics held that the land revenue and the taxation policy of the Government left nothing with the people to fall back upon, and thus aggravated the famine conditions in the country. The administration of the famine relief had in this case been put into operation in a halting manner, and that too in a parsimonious scale.

The losses suffered by the country due to this famine were very great. There was a complete annihilation of the Gujarat cow breed. And for the British India alone the official estimate of the human deaths was between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  and 2 million; though the actual loss was supposed to be greater, yet more so when the Indian states were also considered.

### Measures against famine

The administrative path that Curzon had to follow was therefore clear. He said in his budget speech of March 1905, "such precautionary steps over the whole field of possible action as to prepare ourselves to combat the next" such calamity were to be taken.

Lord Curzon appointed a commission under Anthony (afterwards Lord) Macdonnell to report on the famine. The report was submitted in 1901, in which after mentioning certain defects in the existing system of relief measures, some recommendations for improvement were made. It was recommended that it was essential under such conditions to prevent the people from being demoralised. And this could be done by following the policy of 'moral strategy' which involved threefold action of early suspension of the land revenue and rent, early administration of the famine relief and an early distribution of money for the purchase of cattle and seeds.

Besides the above, the Commission recommended that the Government should encourage and invite a non-official assistance in

such cases, in the way of relief; the construction work should be taken up in the villages themselves, the railway lines should be widely laid, large irrigation works should be undertaken and Agricultural Banks should be established for the benefit of the agriculturists. It was for the first time that it was recommended that the Government should also provide fodder for the cattle and help in their evacuation from the affected areas. Such thus were the recommendations, in the light of which the Famine Codes were revised.

### Agricultural Measures

Agriculture had so far been neglected. The Government being interested simply in the land revenue, nothing had so far been done to introduce scientific practices in it so as to increase output, or to relieve it of its increasing pressure. It was Lord Curzon who for the first time turned serious attention to it and laid down certain lines of reform which, though not worked out fully in his own time, prescribed certain guiding principles for the future.

One of his most important reforms in this field related to the land revenue administration, and in this connection writes L. Frazer : "Lord Curzon earned the right to an honourable place among those who have left their mark upon the land revenue administration of India."<sup>1</sup> There were certain serious defects in the system, the worst being too much of formality and mechanical working. There was an ever increasing tendency among the settlement officers to raise assessments. Revenue was rigorously collected in some provinces and the cultivators were badly harassed. It was keenly asserted by some persons that the repeated famines in the recent times had been due more to the harsh Government demands upon the *ryots* than to the failure of the rains. This statement may be exaggerated, but Curzon's reply to it was in no way satisfactory.

Eleven retired Indian Civil Officers of a record of distinguished service, among whom ten were English and one an Indian, addressed in December 1900 a memorial to the Secretary of State in which they expressed their concern over the defects in the existing land revenue administration. They recommended that (1) the land revenue demand where a cultivator is to pay directly should not exceed one-half of his net profits after the cost of cultivation has been disbursed, (2) when levied from landlords, the maximum should be one-half of the rental; (3) settlements should be made for thirty years; (4) the cultivator's assessment should be enhanced only where there is an increase in the value of the land due either to the rise in prices or to the irrigation facilities provided by the Government; (5) and that the local taxation on land should not exceed a further ten per cent in any case.

1. Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

The Government of Lord Curzon replied to the above memorial in their Land Resolution of 16 January 1902. They refused to make any definite rules so far as the first two points referred to above were concerned. The cautious reply to the third point was that an effort would be made to do away with the terms of settlement shorter than 30 years. The fourth proposal was rejected while regarding the fifth it was claimed that it was already being worked upon. A greater elasticity in the collection of revenue, and a greater resort to the reduction of assessment where there had been local deterioration, were promised. And R.C. Dutt, the Indian representative plainly admitted that "Lord Curzon has approached the subject with a statesmanlike conviction of its importance." But he later on wrote : "If to all this His Excellency had added some clear and workable limits to the government demand in *ryotwari* tracts, and defined some intelligible and equitable grounds for enhancement of revenue in such tracts, the government resolution would have given to millions of cultivators the assurance and protection they need so much."

To sum up, Lord Curzon took the following steps to ameliorate the condition of the Indian peasants as a whole. One of the worst results of the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 had been the increase in the indebtedness of the peasants which assumed a terrible form by the time of Lord Curzon. The railway lines and the development of the other means of communication had made the Punjab agricultural products more easily marketable. Prices of these products therefore increased, which in turn increased the value of the land thus giving the agriculturist all of a sudden to understand that the land which previously was rarely sold could now fetch a good cash price. The very psychological effect of this knowledge made him extravagant in his social functions such as marriages. Land began to be mortgaged and ultimately disposed of to the non-agriculturist money-lender who had neither the knowledge nor a serious desire to till it. Thus, whereas on the one hand the peasants were ruined, on the other hand the agricultural produce suffered, thus creating a serious problem.

Lord Curzon acting wisely, passed the Punjab Land Alienation Act in 1901, under which it was laid down that the land of the hereditary cultivators could not henceforth be sold in the execution of a decree, nor could it be bought by any person without the previous consent of the Government. It was a "heroic protest against the survival of the fittest," thus did the pioneer describe the measure of 1901. The Punjab peasantry indeed was saved and Lord Curzon said in an appeal to the people, "Government has played its part, I invite them to play theirs".

Another very important measure passed in the time of Lord Curzon was the Cooperative Societies Act which made it possible for the Co-operative Societies to be set up to replace the money-lenders. Sir Frederick Nicholson of the Madras Government and M. Dupernex,

I.C.S. who had a vast knowledge of the working of such societies in Italy and France, assisted Curzon, and the Agricultural Banks and the Cooperative Societies sprang up in the rural as well as the urban areas all over the country. The latter were particularly important for teaching the people the lessons of mutual help and self-reliance. The progress however was slow, for which there were several reasons. The cooperative experiment was still in an infancy in the country, the people were not well educated for the purpose, and they still had their attachments with the *baniya* to whom they did not have to make applications and follow other formalities for getting their money. Besides, the establishment of these societies was a vast problem which could not be handled so easily and so soon. Yet although known earlier, Curzon deserves the credit of having introduced the system into practice for the first time in this country.

Another agricultural measure was the Suspensions and Remissions Resolution of 1905 which laid down that the suspension of the revenue collection would henceforth be made when half of the crop of an agriculturist was known to have failed; and this could now be done on the authority of the district officer, without any reference to the headquarters. There were only four agricultural institutions in India at the time of Curzon's arrival. They were at Poona, Nagpur, Saidepur and Kanpur, and were not working satisfactorily. Nor were the agricultural farms of the provincial governments any more a source of new knowledge and education to the people. There was a serious shortage of funds which hampered the scientific advance in agriculture. Lord Curzon's policy is perceivable in his declaration in which he said that their "real reform has been to endeavour for the first time to apply Science on a large scale to the study and practice of Indian agriculture." An Inspector-General of Agriculture was appointed in 1901 to control and direct the new policy. With the assistance of an American philanthropist who donated £20,000 for the purpose, an Agriculture Research Institute was established at Pusa in Bengal to "assist in the solution of the fundamental problems of tropical agriculture." Curzon also fixed an annual grant of £130,000 to the provinces for agricultural research and education.

Some work was done in the field of irrigation as well. Extensive irrigation was proposed by some authorities such as General Sir Arthur Cotton who was known as an apostle of the modern irrigation in India, for increasing the agricultural output in the country, and for checking the recurrence of famine. Curzon appointed a commission under Sir Colvin Scott-Moncrieff to enquire into the matter, which submitted its report in 1903 and recommended that the Government should spend as much as 44 crores of rupees in 20 years to add about 6½ million acres in the irrigated area of the country. Curzon, however, did not accept all the recommendations. An Inspector-General of Irrigation was appointed. Improvement of the existing canal system in the Punjab was undertaken, and the construction of new

canals, as of the Lower Bari Doab, Upper Chenab and the Upper Jhelum was taken in hand. The Government of Curzon also laid down a scheme for guidance in this field for many years to come.

The famine had also brought the defective railway system to light. There had been two systems of the railway management before Curzon; the one being the Company Management, while the other the State Management which was under the Public Works Department. Sir Thomas Robertson, a railway expert who was appointed to report on the matter, submitted his report in 1903 recommending that the working of the railway should be improved root and branch, and they be worked "more as commercial enterprises than they have been in the past." Working on the recommendations Curzon set up a Railway Board of three, i.e., a Chairman and two other members, which was to handle the railway administration and work under the Department of Commerce, Government of India. The work on the new railway lines was also started, in which a commendable progress was made so that by the time Curzon left, six thousand miles of new railway lines had been laid, making the total in India of 28,150 miles; while 3,167 miles of the railway lines were under construction.

### **Administrative Reforms**

At a farewell function at Simla in September 1905, Curzon said : "If I were asked to sum up my work in a single word, I would say efficiency. That has been our gospel, the keynote of our administration." On his arrival in this country the first thing that he noticed was some serious shortcomings in the administrative machinery with which he had to carry the administration of the country. It was slow moving and formality ridden. Curzon himself described the Central Secretariat as the "gigantic quagmire or log, into which every question sinks. Unless you stick a peg with a label over the spot at which it disappeared and from time to time go round and dig out the relics, you will never see anything of them again." One case on which a major decision had to be taken, was discovered by Curzon to have been lying for 61 years to be disposed of, and such other matters led to conclude that the entire machinery required to be completely overhauled; the mere "tightening up screws and oiling wheels" would not help.

Among his reforms in the field were the strict instructions to his officers to reduce the departmental notings to a right proportion. The departments were induced to settle their business, as far as possible, by personal consultations. A uniform body of regulations was drawn up for the working of the Secretariat, pay-scales of the government servants were revised so that every official from the highest to the lowest gained. Efforts were made considerably to reduce the

Government reports and the statistics. And instructions were issued to the provincial governments as well to overhaul their administrative machinery. The result of all this was that the "whole system of administration responded to the influence of a quickened circulation and a more vigorous pulse."

The independence of the governments of Bombay and Madras was not liked by him, and he wrote to the Secretary of State in May 1899: "Decentralization is all very well, but it appears to me in the case of Bombay and Madras to have been carried to a point in which the Supreme Government is nowhere, and in which petty kings of those dominions are even unconscious that responsibility attaches to any one but themselves." He recommended that the position of the Presidency Governors should be reduced to that of the Lieutenant-Governors such as that of UP. This he hoped, would make the ICS more attractive. Though his proposals of the centralisation of the administration were rejected, they showed the way his mind worked.

As a result of the reforms of Curzon, there is no doubt that more efficient working of the administrative machinery was introduced, but the defect in it was that the delicacy and the absorbing interest of the business was lost, making thereby, as Frazer writes, of the Government reports, "a repellant collection of the driest bones imaginable". Efficiency was followed by centralisation; and under the new system a considerable distrust of the Indians, and an insult to their honesty and ability was shown. It was supposed that the English were best suited for high jobs by their education, heredity and capability. There was no need of taking the opinion and the aspirations of the Indians into consideration; the keynote of the administration being: "the bureaucracy knows what is for the good of the people." Thus whatever credit Curzon deserved for his reforms in this field, was clouded by his narrowness of attitude and haughtiness of temperament.<sup>1</sup>

### Financial Reforms

Close of the 19th century saw a definite improvement in the financial conditions of the country. The national budgets from 1899 began to show handsome surpluses, and therefore it was easy for Lord Curzon to remit certain taxes. A Commission appointed at the Indian Office in 1898 had recommended that the British sovereign be made legal tender in India at the value of fifteen rupees, and Curzon passed an Act in September 1899 to that effect. The practical result of it was that there started a flow of gold into this country. Lord Curzon set apart the profits of the silver coinage as a gold

1. See for details, Frazer, *India under Curzon and After*, 1911; also Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*; Edwardes Michael, *High Noon of Empire*.



reserve fund, which rose to the figure of £9,000,000 by the time, Curzon left India.

This improvement in the financial condition of the country was made use of to alleviate certain grievances of the people. Certain taxes, as referred to above, were remitted, and those provinces which had suffered the most due to the recent famines, were given back a million and a quarter of the land revenue in 1902. The salt tax was reduced, so that by the year 1904 it reached the lowest limit since the Mutiny.

Another financial reform was his continuation of the policy of financial decentralisation—the only exception to his policy of centralisation ! To remove certain defects of the quinquennial system of 1882, Lord Curzon introduced a “quasi-permanent system” in 1904, under which the share of each province in the revenue was permanently fixed, to be revised only in case of a grave emergency or in case of its having been shown inadequate by practical experience. Under the new system annual grants were to be made for specific purposes, and the provincial surplus was to remain with the provinces. The principle of the divided heads continued as before, and so did the Central control over the provincial budgets and the provincial appointments.

The merits of the new financial system were that the provinces got a greater freedom in their financial affairs, and greater certainty was added to their financial prospects. Since the surplus was now to remain with them, the new system encouraged economy in their expenditures, and vagueness in their financial position was removed.

### Police

There were certain defects in the Police organisation of the country. The majority of the employees in the police were uneducated, inefficient, and were held in doubt by the people who believed them to be secretly supporting the criminals. In 1902 Curzon appointed a Commission under Sir Andrew Frazer to report on the matter. The Commission in its report remarked : “The Police force is far from efficient, it is generally regarded as corrupt and oppressive, and it has utterly failed to secure the confidence and cordial cooperation of the people.” In order to remove the defects, the Commission recommended that the promotions in the police should be replaced by direct recruitments. The police force should consist of “European Service from England, Provincial Service recruited in India, Upper Subordinate Service consisting of inspectors and sub-inspectors and Lower Subordinate Service consisting of head constables and constables”. The salary rates should be improved, and the minimum monthly pay of a constable should be eight rupees. The provincial police forces should be increased, and the

existing available village agencies should be used for the purpose. Schools should be established for the training of officers and constables. In each province a Criminal Investigation Department should be created, with such a Department in the Centre at the head of which should be appointed a Director of Criminal Intelligence. Investigation of the offences should be done on the spot, and the detention of the suspects without formal arrest should be declared illegal. Such thus were the recommendations on the basis of which Curzon reorganised the entire police system in 1905.

Despite all the reforms, however, the police still could not win the cordial cooperation of the people. It continued to be corrupt, inefficient and oppressive. And the people continued their suspicions for its being in league with criminals.

### **Education**

One of the greatest achievements of Lord Curzon, writes Frazer, lay in the field of education. One may, however, differ as to how much of this achievement was positive and how much negative. The existing system of education had been built on Macaulay's Minute of 1833 and Wood's Despatch of 1854. Among the defects from which it suffered was that the masses of India were not touched by it. Moreover it was "too slavish an imitation of English models and was fitted to turn out an army of clerks rather than leaders of public opinion and thought." There was a lack of the Central control, the system was not inspired by a common principle, nor was it directed towards a common goal. All this irritated Curzon. He held that the system in order to be efficient, "must conform to an orderly and scientific scheme, for which in the last resort the Supreme Government should be held accountable whether it be for praise or for blame".

To put his views into practice, in September 1901 Lord Curzon called a conference of the highest Government officials and the official representatives at Simla. No Indian was invited, and among the non-officials, only Dr Miller, the Principal of the Madras Christian College received an invitation to attend. There was a perfect secrecy in the conference, the deliberations of which were never published. After "profound deliberations" in the conference a Universities Commission under the chairmanship of the Law Member, Sir Thomas Raleigh was appointed in 1902. The only Indian member appointed to the Commission was Syed Husain Belgrami, the Director of Public Instructions in the Nizam's dominions. Hindus having protested for the lack of their representation on the Commission, later on Justice Guru Das Bannerjee of the Calcutta High Court was included. After five months of deliberations the Commission submitted its report in June 1902 in which Guru Das gave a note of dissent. The report was published in October 1902,

and on its basis the Universities Bill was drafted to become law in March 1904.

The Commission recommended that (1) The Senates, Syndicates and Faculties of the universities should be reorganised to make them more representative. (2) Legal powers of the older universities should be enlarged, and all these universities, old as well as new, should be recognised as teaching bodies. (3) The territorial jurisdiction of each university should be clearly defined, and the affiliated colleges of CP and UP should be removed from the jurisdiction of the Calcutta University. (4) The affiliation rules of the universities should be made more strict and efficient, and no institution should be affiliated unless it strictly fulfils the required conditions, nor should it be permitted to fall from that standard once affiliated; regarding which the Senate of the respective university should satisfy itself from time to time. (5) Every college should have a properly constituted governing body to manage it. (6) Courses of study and methods of examination should be improved upon, regarding which several suggestions were made. (7) And finally, that the residential facilities for and discipline among the students should be properly looked after.

Accepting these recommendations, Lord Curzon passed the Universities Act of 1904, in which the following provisions were made :

1 The Governing bodies of the universities were to be reconstituted, and the size of the Senates was reduced to minimum of 50 and maximum of 100; while the number of the elected fellows was fixed at 20 for Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, for the rest, the number being 15. The Senates were also to include directors of public instruction, the director at Calcutta to be a permanent member of the Syndicate.

2. Powers of the universities were enlarged, and they were also to resume teaching functions for the post-Graduate classes, appoint professors and lecturers for the purpose and promote study and research.

3. The Syndicates of the universities got a statutory recognition, and the university teachers were to get an adequate representation on them.

4. The Senates were to be responsible for keeping a proper standard of examinations, courses of studies, text-books, and working facilities for the students. They were also to propose government regulations for the recognition of high schools.

5. Undergraduate training was left to the colleges, and strict conditions were to be laid down for the affiliation of new colleges

which were for this purpose to be periodically inspected by the Syndics.

6. Details of the university policy and affiliation and disaffiliation of colleges were to be subject to the approval of the Government.

7. The Vice-Chancellors were to be appointed by the Government.

8. The Governor-General in Council was empowered to define the territorial jurisdictions of different universities.

Commenting on this Act, thus wrote V. Chirol : "As was to be expected under a Viceroy who was a great autocrat with an overwhelming faith in the efficiency of Government machinery, the chief purpose of the Act of 1904 was to tighten the hold of the Government on the Universities. ....Practically nothing was henceforth to be done without the approval of Government."

The recommendations of the Commission were not liked by the Indians, the better known among whom, like Sir P. Mehta, Sir S.N. Bannerjea and G.K. Gokhale, criticised them and opposed the Universities Bill tooth and nail. The critics asserted that the proposed reforms aimed less at an improvement in the University education than at the changes in the administrative machinery of the Universities. Affiliation and disaffiliation was, according to them, rather a forged weapon to curtail higher education. The proposal to abolish the second grade colleges, which were mostly indigenous, was the most unreasonable, which commanded nothing less than to "sacrifice surface for height." Raising of the college fee was bad and amounted to a discouragement of higher education. The reduction in the size of the Senates, and increase of the official element in them aimed at nothing less than a complete transformation of the Universities into Government departments. Lord Curzon was blamed of having political intentions rather than educational, for, as it was asserted, his aim was to prevent the Universities from becoming the nurseries of nationalism, and to keep the masses of India illiterate to enable England to continue her imperialistic rule in this country.

S.N. Bannerjea organised protest meetings in the Town Hall at Calcutta. And Gokhale was no less violent in the condemnation of the intentions of the Viceroy. This policy in fact, as Lovat Frazer wrote, "produced the greatest bitterness among the leaders of Indian opinion." Later on in 1917, even the Sadler Commission admitted that the reforms actually needed were never attempted. The problem of the High School Training and organisation remained unsolved,

and no proper synthesis was made between colleges and the Universities. Nor was the foundation of the sound University education laid.

Finally we may conclude with the views of Lord Ronaldshay, a biographer of Lord Curzon: "One would like to think that labour so great as that of the Viceroy had met with a commensurate reward—but...truth compels the admission that the changes actually brought about were surely out of all proportion either to the amount of time and thought which the Viceroy had devoted to them or to the violence of the opposition with which they had been assailed. Important improvements in matters of detail were no doubt effected, but in its broad outline the system of higher education remained much as it had been before."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, however, the changes introduced by Curzon were not devoid of all merit. Lovat Frazer asserts that the all India agitation against the education reforms of the Viceroy was engineered by a handful of politicians, "who thought that by seizing the control of national education they could serve ulterior purposes of their own."<sup>2</sup> These remarks may be too generalised, yet it cannot be denied that the education did receive an impetus, however meagre in the time of Lord Curzon. Special attention was paid to the primary education, which, in addition to the special grant which it received in 1902, got a permanent grant of over £ 230,000 a year. The pay scales of the teachers were improved, the need for a special agricultural education and research was realised, and the female and technical education received attention. The Institute of Science at Bangalore was raised by Jamshedjee Tata only as a result of the efforts of Lord Curzon.

### Local Self-Government

In April 1900 the Calcutta Municipal Bill, which had been initiated by Alexander Mackenzie and the other anti-Ripon agitators had already been before the Legislative Council when Curzon came, became law. The measure as it was passed, provided for a permanent European majority with an independent executive in the Calcutta Corporation. The size of the corporation was reduced. The 25 elected members of the corporation having been knocked out, the rest who remained were reduced to a minority, and were left with no opportunities of influencing the activities of the corporation. The Presidentship was also given into the hands of the officials.

In the initial stages Curzon himself condemned the Bill as having been drafted "partly in panic and partly in anger." Nor was the

1. Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, II, p. 253.

2. Frazer, *op. cit*, pp. 191-200.

retention of the elected members but at the same time transference of the actual powers into the hands of an Executive Committee which was largely English, liked by Curzon, who termed it as a "clumsy and mischievous form of dualism." Yet, however, ultimately he seems to have been converted and he associated himself with the passage of the Bill.

The Act, as it is clear from its provisions, was bound to be criticised by the Indian intelligentsia of the Nation, who openly putting the entire blame on Curzon, declared that he lacked an interest in educating the people. The Congress passed a resolution condemning Curzon's policy as subversive of local self-government." Protest meetings were held, and Calcutta faced "vortex of an agitation that was only surpassed by the anti-partition demonstration. Twenty-eight Commissioners resigned as a protest, and S N. Bannerjea, the leader of the agitation, never entered the Corporation again till 1923 when the Bill was amended raising the number of the elected members to 4/5th and handing over the offices of the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer to the persons elected by the Corporation subject to the Government. The amendment was introduced by S.N. Bannerjea himself, who declared it to be a great day for himself, affording "a matter of personal solace and gratification."

### Partition of Bengal

The partition of Bengal was necessary for several reasons. The existing province of Bengal was supposed to be unmanageable in dimensions. Its population was seventy-eight million, almost twice that of the United Kingdom; and it was therefore, as Curzon remarked "antiquated, illogical and productive of inefficiency." Because of this, its districts lying on the east of the Ganges suffered from an utter neglect. The police administration here was the worst, and the internal communication being bad, the "life and property on the rivers," as a recent commission of enquiry remarked, "was unsafe to a degree which could not be tolerated by the government of any civilised country." The peasants suffered from the illegal exactions of the absentee landlords, and the Lieutenant-Governor too much burdened with the duties of such a large administration, could do little to amend the situation.

The plan for the partition of the province originated in 1896 when Sir William Ward, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, suggested that the Chittagong, Dacca and the Mymensingh divisions of the province should be transferred to Assam. In 1901 the question again attracted the attention of Lord Curzon, but writes Roberts, there "was no undue haste, as has been sometimes alleged, nor any particularly high-handed procedure. The policy fully deliberated, many alternative schemes were considered, and the plans were modi-

from time to time in accordance with criticism from outside.”<sup>1</sup> The criticism of the public was bitter indeed. Lord Curzon’s educational reforms, abolition of competition in the Provincial Services and other such acts had already aroused suspicions in the public mind regarding his intentions towards the national welfare. And now the proposal of the partition of Bengal fell like a bombshell. Lord Curzon, however, forwarded to the Secretary of State that there was an almost unparalleled unanimity on the subject. We do not understand whether this “unparalleled unanimity” pertained to the officials, or it was a simple act of deliberately misinforming the Home authorities. The Resolution for the partitions of Bengal appeared on 3 December 1903; and on 19 July 1905 the details of the partitions were published. The new province named as the ‘Eastern Bengal and Assam’ was set up. It included besides Assam, the Chittagong, Dacca and the Rajshahi divisions of Bengal. Its total area was 106,540 square miles, and its population 31 million—of which 18 million were the Muslim and about 12 million Hindus.

The Government tried to justify it as “a mere readjustment of administrative boundaries.” But to the excited public opinion it was an attempt at breaking the political unity of the province, an attempt at playing Hindus against the Muslims, and at disrupting the “new and surging spirit of nationalism.” The above seems to be proved by some irresponsible acts of the Viceroy himself. Lovat Frazer writes regarding this : “His sojourn in Eastern Bengal, his harangues of Muslim meetings, explaining the benefits of the scheme to obtain communal support for it, were methods of a political agitator and derogatory to the dignity and prestige of the Viceroy of India.” And it is further proved, as Frazer continues, by the “foolish utterances of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the Governor of the newly created province, who declared that he had two wives, Hindu and Mahommedan, but that the Mahommedan wife was the favourable wife.”<sup>2</sup>

S N. Bannerjea wrote : “The announcement fell like a bomb-shell. We felt that we have been insulted, humiliated and tricked...it would be fatal to our political progress and to that close union between Hindus and Muslims upon which the prospects of Indian advancement so largely depended.” Protest meetings were held, and protest speeches were delivered all over the country in which partition was declared to be “an attempt to divide a homogeneous people, a deliberate and sinister attack upon the traditions, history, and even the language of the Bengalis.”<sup>3</sup> Swadeshi Movement was inaugurated on the 17 August 1905 at a public meeting held in the Calcutta Town hall. The boycott of the English goods was also commenced. And both these became strong weapons in the future Congress battles against the British.

1. Roberts *op. cit.* pp. 548-49.

2. Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 380-96.

3. Bannerjea, S.N., *A Nation in Making*; Roberts *op. cit.*, p. 550.



On 16 October 1905, the day of the inauguration of the partition, was observed the day of national mourning in Bengal. The people fasted and went to the Ganges on that day. They tied *rakhies* on each other's wrists as a bond of unity, and the cries of *Bande Mataram* were raised. People took vows to boycott the English goods.

"The united voice of the whole nation," however, writes B.C. Chatterjee, "rose and fell like one crying in the wilderness. None heeded it. The Viceroy persuaded in his scheme of administrative division; and the English Parliament pronounced its benediction upon it. The political method of the Congress (i.e. constitutional agitation) had been tried and it failed—and the people fell upon bitterness."<sup>1</sup> The agitation, writes Frazer, made the Viceroy "bitter, his contemptuous indifference heightened public resentment; numerous were the public meetings held and petitions addressed to him but in vain." The shouting of *Bande Mataram* in Bengal, was declared illegal. The schools and colleges were threatened with the stoppage of grants if students were not checked from agitation. The agitation was condemned as an action of the interested wire-pullers among the pleaders of Bengal. *Statesman*, a pro-British paper wrote: "There never was a time in the history of British India when public feeling and public opinion were so little regarded by the Supreme Government as they are by the present administration." And again: "Government has blundered apparently into a childish and futile policy which can only have the effect of manufacturing an army of martyrs."

Gokhale pleaded in the Legislature: "My Lord, conciliate Bengal." *Daily News* of London appealed to Mr Brodrick to "call a halt in the matter of partition." Lord Macdonnell declared it "the hugest blunder committed since the battle of Plassey." The Congress made it an All India issue. And the more moderate party, "supported by a section of Liberalism in England and a minority in the civil service, argued that, whatever the abstract merits of the scheme, it should have been abandoned when it was found to be repugnant to national sentiment."<sup>2</sup>

It should have been the best solution of the problem if the united Bengal had been placed under the rule of Governor assisted by an executive council. Historically there was much to be said in favour of this proposal, as P.E. Roberts writes: "the Charter Acts of 1833 and 1853 had actually authorized such a government, and the Act of 1853 had merely legalized the appointment of Lieutenant Governors 'unless and until' this change could conveniently be made."<sup>3</sup>

The great agitation against the partition of Bengal continued till

1. Chatterjee, B.C., *The Heart of Aryavarta*, p. 88.
2. See Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 380-96.
3. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

December 1911, when at the historic Coronation Durbar, the partition was annulled, and the seat of the Government was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. Commenting on this annulment wrote Lord Hardinge of Penshurst : "The Bengalis of the two Bengals were enthusiastic over the reunion of their province, of which the partition had been forced upon them by Lord Curzon...and they regarded the change as an act of great statsemanship and reconciliation on the part of the Sovereign."<sup>1</sup>

### Other Changes

Among the other and minor reforms in the time of Lord Curzon was the constitutional measure, the Act of 1904, which enabled the Viceroy to appoint the 6th member to his Council. The portfolio given to this member was that of Commerce and Industry, for which a new department was established in 1905.

Lord Curzon took keen interest in the protection of the ancient monuments of this country, and he "made it clear at the very beginning of his term of office that the task of exploring, preserving, and, where necessary, restoring the architectural heritage of India, was one which he unhesitatingly accepted as an obligation on behalf of the Government of the land."<sup>2</sup> And his admirable sympathy with the Mughal architecture is obvious from his securing a beautiful Mughal type of lamp for the great dome in the Taj Mahal after six months of hard efforts and a personal visit to Cairo for the purpose. Lord Curzon appointed special persons to collect specimens of the works of arts representing ideas, traditions and beliefs of the different parts of the country. These specimens were collected for an exhibition at Delhi at the time of the Grand Durbar. As a result of these activities of his, as Ronaldshay writes, he "was certainly successful in arousing a healthy interest in the still vital capabilities of Indian art."<sup>3</sup> His greatest work in this connection, however, was the passage in 1904 of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, under which the historical buildings of the country were taken under the protection of the Government.

For supervising the working conditions in the mines a Chief Inspector of Mines was appointed. The work of sanitation also received his attention, and a Chief Sanitary Inspector was appointed. Efforts were made to improve sea fisheries. And in 1903, an Act was passed, which facilitated the formation of regulations for the use of electricity for lighting and other purposes.

1. Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, p. 52.
2. Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, II, p. 332.
3. Ronaldshay, *op. cit.*, I. p. 333.

### Queen's Death and Durbar

On 23 January 1901 Queen Victoria died. The great monarch of England, who will always be remembered in the history of India with gratitude for her historic Proclamation of 1858, which if honestly worked on should have rendered a great service to the progress of this country. India expressed her genial sympathy through demonstration and several other means. In her memory Lord Curzon built the Victoria Memorial Hall.

Encouraged by the demonstration of sympathy in India at the death of the Queen, Lord Curzon wrote to the King, the successor of the Queen: "I do not know if the idea has ever presented itself to your Majesty of paying a short visit to India and crowning yourself Emperor of India? There would be such an outburst of loyalty as India has never seen and the act will be one of incalculable political value." The King, however, could not come to this country, and Lord Curzon decided to solemnise the occasion by holding a Durbar at Delhi where the accession of the King would be proclaimed. In 1903 Lord Curzon, riding a caparisoned elephant, made his triumphant entry into Delhi, the historic capital of the Mughals, and a Grand Durbar was held in the city which involved an expenditure of £84,000. The provincial governments also celebrated the occasion, and the total expenditure incurred by them was £100,000.

There was a lot of criticism of this act of the Viceroy, in England as well as in India. The Durbar was said to be "an outcome of his vanity and love of pomp." Lord Curzon tried to justify the Durbar by saying: "I hope I am not a rhapsodist or a dreamer. But to me, and I hope, to the majority of us, the Durbar meant not a panorama or a procession. It was a landmark in the history of the people and a chapter in the ritual of the state." And again, he said: "The one thing most needed in India is the sense of common participation in a great political system and of fellow-citizenship of British Empire." But if this was the purpose of the Viceroy, it was entirely defeated. The Durbar in fact was ill-fitted against the background of relentless economy and a terrible plague and bitter famines from which the country at that time was suffering. The real value of the Durbar lay in fact not in the demonstration of the so-called "fellow-citizenship of British Empire," but in the imperial demonstration of the British power, for which again in fact, there was necessity, as India already knew by this time the strength of the yoke under which she suffered. The very reverse happened of what Lord Curzon indeed professed. The frightened Indian chiefs were denied at the Durbar even the courtesy of Lord Lytton's days. To them, the Durbar was a humiliation, and the expression of loyalty on their part was therefore forced and unreal. Moreover, the event was an anachronism in an age of growing democracy, the greatest champion of which, England claimed herself to be.

1. Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

## CURZON-KITCHNER CONTROVERSY

One great problem which Curzon had to face, and which ultimately brought about his retirement, was his difference of view with Lord Kitchner on the question of military administration. Under the system as it obtained in India at the time, the executive head of the army was the Commander-in-Chief who was also usually appointed as an extraordinary member of the Viceroy's Council. Besides this, the administrative department of the army was held by an ordinary member of the Council, who was known as Military Member, but not holding any army command so long as he remained in this office. This member was always in close touch with the Viceroy whose constitutional adviser he was in the military matters, and to whom he gave his own views and criticism on all the proposals coming from the Commander-in-Chief in connection with the army administration. Lord Kitchner who came to India as Commander-in-Chief in 1902 was a man of strong will and ambition, and he did not like this. The Russian scare being in the ascent, he wrote: "There is no doubt that, if we had a big war on the frontier, there would be a frightful crash. A system under which Transport, Supply, Remounts, Ordnance are entirely divorced from the executive command of the army, and placed under an independent authority, is one which must cause an entire reorganisation as soon as war is declared—rather late to begin." The existing system caused an "enormous delay and endless discussion," he held, and proposed that in place of the existing cumbrous machinery, there should be a single army department, which be placed under a complete control of the Commander-in-Chief. The Military Member in the existing set up, though being in an inferior position, enjoyed greater powers than the Commander-in-Chief, and Kitchner wrote to the Viceroy that "he had perhaps made a mistake in coming out as Commander-in-Chief and that he ought rather to have been a military member."

In 1905, the Secretary of State referred the question to the Viceroy for an opinion. The matter was discussed in the Viceroy's Council. Lord Roberts supported the views of Kitchner, who held that the existing system was cumbrous and complicated and hence it should be abolished.<sup>1</sup> In the opinion of Kitchner, the change that he proposed did not in any way make a difference in the position of the Viceroy, for the latter still could accept or reject a proposal coming before him. The head of the army should have a close relation with the head of the Supreme Government, and it was utterly wrong, he held, that the Commander-in-Chief "should be criticised from a military point of view by the Military Member of Council, who must always necessarily be both junior in rank and inferior in military experience to the Commander-in-Chief."

1. For further details see Sir George Arthur, *Life of Kitchner*, II pp. 200-2.

Lord Curzon, however, held a different view. In his opinion it was impossible for any single person to discharge both the duties of the Commander-in-Chief and those of the Military Member. Since such a combination would determine the military authority of the Government of India as a whole, it "will substitute for it a military autocracy in the person of the Commander-in-Chief." Moreover, he said, a civilian Viceroy must have some competent military authority to advise him, without which it would be too difficult for him to oppose a strong-willed Commander-in-Chief, and thus the civil authority would become dependent on the military authority. Further he said that the question had been under discussion for the last forty years, but under no Viceroy had it been provided that the existing system was defective. Sir Edmond Elles, the Military Member, forwarded his own arguments in a minute, to support the views of the Viceroy.

Thus to the views of the Council which the Viceroy sent to the Secretary of State, Kitchner added a note of dissent; the rest of the members being in favour of Curzon. The Secretary of State, Mr Brödrick, suggested a compromise, which was approved by the Cabinet. Under this the control of the entire purely military matter should be transferred to the Commander-in-Chief who alone should have the right to speak in the Council as an expert in military matters. While another member of the Council should be left to deal with the subsidiary department, not purely military, and should be known as the Military Supply Member. It was suggested that Sir Edmond Elles who had been working under the old system, should retire, and in his place another officer should be appointed to work with the curtailed powers.

These proposals not being acceptable to Lord Curzon, he prepared to resign. The situation was, however, saved by Sir Danzil Ibbetson who suggested certain modifications in the compromise proposals, under which the Supply Member would be made "available for official consultation by the Viceroy on all military questions without distinction." Lord Kitchner agreed, and the Cabinet also gave in. But the system still could not work, as later on it became clear that the two sides accepted the proposed modification in different spirits. The trouble arose when Curzon wanted to appoint General Barrow as the new member for the Military Supplies. The Secretary of State rejected this proposal, and wanted rather a technical hand to deal with the matters of supply. The question was of sacrificing either Curzon or Kitchner. The Secretary of State preferred the sacrifice of the former. Lord Curzon resigned in August 1905.

Later on, however, the British experiences in the Mesopotamia operations during the Great War proved beyond doubt that Curzon was correct in his opinion, and Kitchner wrong. The Mesopotamian

Commission reported : "It is clear that the combination of the duties of the Commander-in-Chief in India and Military Member of Council cannot be adequately performed by any one man in time of war, and that existing organisation is at once over centralised at its head and cumbrous in its quality below."

### Military Reforms

Despite all these troubles, however, a considerable number of reforms were introduced in the Army in the time of Lord Curzon. Between 1902 and 1904 Mopalas, Gurkhas and Punjabis replaced the local recruits in infantry and cavalry at many places. The Indian infantry was reorganised into four double Company battalions in 1900. The Indian officers remained in charge of each Company for internal administration, but in the parade and in the field the command was held by the British officers. The Indian regiments were rearmed, and better guns were supplied to the artillery. The transport service was overhauled as a whole. An Imperial Cadet Corps consisting of young men from the princely and noble families was constituted in 1901. The Naval Defence Squadron of 1871 was abolished in 1901, and in its place the Royal Navy took over the Indian defence. The services of the Indian army were used abroad in China against the Boxer insurgents, and in Somaliland against the Mullah. In South Africa the Indian troops saved Natal and helped to hold Ladysmith.

### THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER POLICY

"The problem of the North-West Frontier is one of the abiding difficulties of the Government of India."<sup>1</sup> The Government of India had two frontiers on the North-West, the one being the administrative frontier, while the other was the political frontier. Within the administrative frontier there was an ordinary system of government, while beyond the administrative frontier, i.e., between the administrative frontier and the political frontier, lay a vast plexus of rugged brown mountains amid which lived some of the fiercest and the most war-like races of the world. The area of this part of the frontiers was about 25,000 square miles, and its population was about 1½ million almost all of whom were fighters, and were probably capable of placing an army of about 300,000 in the field. This part of the frontiers extended from the Afghan district of Wakhan on the Pamirs to the borders of Baluchistan. Its southern half was bisected by Kurram Valley, while from the Kurram Valley to a point a little north of the Kabul river, exact limits of the Afghan jurisdiction were never properly demarcated.

1. *Frazer, India and Curzon and After*, p. 39. A detailed account is available in this book.

The people of this area were divided into innumerable sections and sub-sections. In the north they offered a loose allegiance to their local chiefs, while in the south they were more or less democratic. Everywhere, however, they were liable to be inflamed by the fanatical priests who had a strong hold upon them. From the times immemorial this part of the world had never been permanently conquered. Whenever an invader came from the Central Asia, these tribes were either bribed, or they hung on the flanks of the invader to rob and kill, or withdrew to their mountain fastnesses where they remained till the waves of the invasion had been swept away. At times a shadowy suzerainty was claimed over them by the Afghan rulers, but they always had to bribe these people to keep the passes open. The people of this area wandered in gangs far and wide in India, pilfering everywhere and sometimes levying blackmail in lonely villages ever far away in Madras and Bengal. They fought with the tribesmen in the Afghan territories and plundered the rich Indian villages. They had feuds among themselves, their quarrels mostly about women and strange notions of honour. Among them the might was always right.

The British came into contact with these people after their annexation of the Punjab in 1849, shortly after which they had to send an expedition against some Sawati clans to stop their repeated incursions into the Indian territories. This expedition, however, proved to be a forerunner of 53 other such expeditions ranging from the strength of 280 men to 40,000 troops. Millions were spent, and thousands of lives were sacrificed to keep peace in the country. Occasionally they had been able to give an offending tribe a heavy punishment, but more often they suffered more severely than them. These tribesmen fought from behind the rocks, fired on the British camps at night, and hence "butcher and bolt" was the only British maxim to deal with them.

The policy towards the frontiers, however, was yet unsettled. There were two alternatives with which the problem could be met. The first was that the Government in India should continue to send the expeditions as hitherto they had been doing, while the second was that they should extend their administrative control right upto the political frontier. The latter alternative, however, was very difficult. In order to follow this the Government had to construct at least three railway lines and a large network of military roads. A cantonment had to be established in Maidan, the very heart of Tirah. Besides, it would involve a bloody war against these tribes extending over years and costing huge sums of money. The expenditure incurred on this occupation would stop the whole internal development of the country, and thereby create an unrest in every city of India. The whole available resources of the army would be taxed to bring about 300,000 fighting men under control. Moreover, recently the problem had become more complicated as a result of an



enormous influx of arms and ammunition into the tribal country and Afghanistan. And yet more, the moment the British intentions for the occupation of these territories were known, the whole frontier from one end to the other would be ablaze. The ruler of Afghanistan would consider it as a prelude to the conquest of Afghanistan itself, and the British would be involved in an inevitable war with that country. Thus, as it is clear, it was difficult to follow the second alternative. But to continue sending expeditions every year and wasting huge amounts of money and large numbers of lives too was not a good alternative. A third solution to the problem had therefore to be sought.

The credit goes to Lord Curzon that he was able to see through and find a solution. Lovat Frazer writes : "He did not dispose of the frontier question forever, because there can be no finality in such a problem. But he devised a policy which time has amply justified, he terminated the almost useless warfare, and he gave India eleven years of comparative peace upon her borders."

### Chitral

Before, however, dealing with the frontier question as a whole and laying down a general policy for it, as referred to above, Lord Curzon had to deal with certain troubles in Chitral where the general policy, later laid down for rest of the frontiers, was not strictly followed. The State of Chitral lay under the mighty range of the Hindukush which rose like a natural wall and cut off India from the Russian sphere of influence on the Pamirs. It was felt essential that the British should establish some visible signs of their influence in Chitral, otherwise it was feared that the Russians would send their emissaries through some hole in the wall and intrigue against the British. Chitral was the only point where the Russian frontiers practically touched those of India. The people of Chitral though less disposed to wage a war against the British, yet according to the high opinions they could not be trusted for their capability to guard the narrow gate without an effective help of the British.

The policy being followed here before Curzon though unsettled, yet was a forward policy. In 1895 there had been a civil war between the claimants of the Chitral throne, as we have already seen. The British interfered and the trouble culminated into the small British force under Sir George Robertson in the local fort being besieged. An expedition had to be sent under Sir Robert Low for the relief of the small garrison. Sir Low had to pass through the country of Swat and Dir, to the people of which, as already instructed, he issued proclamation assuring that the British forces would be withdrawn immediately after the object in Chitral had been accomplished.

1. Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

The people of Swat and Dir, however, not accepting the assurances, Sir Low had to fight his way through. After the object had been accomplished, the Government of India unanimously desired in May 1895 that a permanent force be kept in Chitral. Lord Rosebury's Cabinet in England rejected this proposal. But Rosebury having soon been defeated on the credit vote, was replaced by Lord Salisbury who supported the Government of India's proposal and a force was therefore permanently kept in Chitral.

In order to improve the communication after the above step had been taken, a road was built in Chitral to which Swat and Dir offered no resistance. In July 1897 however there broke out a rapid revolt all along the frontier. The Swat tribesmen among whom the Muslim fanatics played the main part, attacked the little British outpost at Chakdara beside the Swat river, and also attacked a large encampment of the British troops on the Malkand heights. Lord Curzon, during a debate in February 1898, delivered a speech on the subject which was supposed to be his ablest in the House of Commons. In this speech he vehemently criticised the policy of Government of India in Chitral, and proposed that a policy the like that of Sir Robert Sandeman in Baluchistan should be followed; the policy being that "of mingled courage and conciliation, and, above all, a policy of confidence and of moving about and acquiring the friendship of the tribes." He laid down certain points of the policy which later on he was to follow in India.

Thus when Curzon came to this country he had a clear vision as to how the Chitral problem was to be solved. Under this, "the scheme adopted for the retention of British surveillance in Chitral was modest but adequate." Instead of building a large cantonment to remind the ruler of its presence, it was decided to build only a small garrison, best to be maintained at Drosh which lay at some distance to the South. Thus a small fort was built at Drosh, the Chitral fort was strengthened to maintain order within and to defend it from without, the road was simultaneously improved, and a telegraph line was constructed a year or two later. A small force of Chitral levies was raised to hold minor posts along the road. And the more important feature of the policy was the raising of a force of the Chitral Scouts themselves for guerrilla warfare, to be periodically trained in batches, the Scouts being permitted only while under training.

The strength of this force, of the Chitral Scouts in 1910 was 1200. The efficiency of this force, wrote Frazer, "is dubious, because the Chitralis cannot long endure discipline and they are not a good type of fighting men; but it may be assumed that the Scouts would serve the limited purpose for which they are intended."

Curzon had declared his policy before he arrived in India as: Russia "has planted her soldiers right upto the waters of the Oxus, and we are equally bound to do the same."<sup>1</sup> And to remove the suspicions of the local inhabitants of the frontier areas, this could best be done by raising a force of these men themselves to serve the British cause.

Some responsible British officers criticised the policy of keeping a single regiment in Chitral which being so remotely isolated, would always be in danger. But the high authorities thought this criticism to be wrong; as it was firmly hoped that the Chitral garrison would always hold its own in emergency till the relief arrived. Moreover the reason which necessitated the sending of the force continued for long; and the policy stood the test for thirteen years, atleast till 1911 when Frazer wrote his book.

Chitral, however, was a part, and "by no means the most important part of the broader issues of frontier policy which were adjusted during his Viceroyalty" The settlement of Chitral, in fact, was a necessary prelude to the examination of the whole Pathan frontier, the conditions of which at this time were muddled and dangerous. No part of it had as yet completely recovered from the effects of the recent war. The batches of troops had been left at isolated points in the tribal territory by the receding British invasion. The Khyber Pass so shamelessly abandoned, had a garrison of regulars at Landi Kotal. On the Samana Range there were more regular troops in positions strategically unsound. There was a force locked up at the farther end of the Kurram Valley, a movable column in Swat, some troops in the Tochi Valley, and else-where in lonely posts

There were two schools of thought on the frontier problem, as already referred to. The one favoured a "Forward Policy", while the other desired to follow the "Back to the Indus Policy." Curzon, however, belonged to neither of these. He was against Forward Policy except for remaining in Chitral And he was equally against a definite retreat. Lord Curzon, in fact, is said to have founded a new school the essential principles of which, as he himself declared, were: "withdrawal of British forces from advanced positions, employment of tribal forces in the defence of tribal country, concentration of British forces in British territory behind them as a safeguard and a support, and improvement of communications in the rear." In this policy there was to be no locking up of the regular British troops in fortified positions far from their bases, while at the same time the territories from which they were to be withdrawn were not to be left without control. The essence of the policy, "which he avowedly borrowed from Baluchistan, was to make the tribesmen themselves responsible for the maintenance of order", In some areas the enrolment of the local inhabitants in military police

1. Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-46.

was proposed; while in others where the people were more soldierly, or the region was more important, the local tribal men were to be enlisted in definite military services as irregular troops. And in nearly all the cases the forces so raised were to be commanded by the British officers. And further, since these irregular and police forces, could not be left to their own devices in cases of sudden risings, and since they themselves were likely to mutiny, Lord Curzon adopted the principle of "moveable columns of regular troops at convenient centres on the edge of the plains, ready always to march at a moment's notice to the relief of the tribal forces".

If the policy abovementioned was to be put into effect, it necessarily involved an improvement of the roads leading to the frontiers, an extension of the railways—particularly light lines, and an enlargement of certain bases within the administrative frontiers. And all these works were immediately undertaken.

This policy was put into action. More men of Dir and Swat were enrolled as levies. A regiment was placed at Chitral. The farthest regular garrison in the north was placed at Chakdara Bridge over the Swat river, and was supported by a greatly reduced force on the heights of Malkand. Of nearly 4,000 regular troops in the Khyber Pass, all were withdrawn; and the Khyber Rifles raised among the Afridis and the other tribes were remodelled and left to guard the Pass. A light line was constructed from the main railway at Nowshera to Dargon at the foot of Malkand. Another railway line was extended to Jamrud, and a cart road was built at the back of the hills to the north of Khyber as an alternative route to Landi-Kotal. The road was made entirely by tribal labour.

Numerous other measures were adopted the details of which would be very difficult to give. Roughly we may sum up, as Frazer did in 1911 : the "tribesmen under varying forms of enlistment now hold.....in brief, all the main doors of the North-West Frontier. They are supported by forces of the border military police, whose duty it is to prevent the incursions of marauding freebooters into the districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan in British administrative territory."

When Lord Curzon left this country, by that time the number of the regular troops on the wrong side of the administrative boundary had been reduced from 15,000 to 4,000. The tribal forces, mostly recruited under him, were raised to 10,000. And besides that, at regular intervals, payments which were nothing better than a sort of bribery, were made to certain tribesmen. The sum thus expended was nothowever large, and sometimes the heavy fines exacted from the tribesmen compensated this expenditure to considerable

extent. The greatest advantage of these payments was that a threat of their withdrawal often stopped a truculence.

The merit of the new frontier policy founded by Lord Curzon can hardly be exaggerated. During the whole of his period as a Governor-General in this country, peace was only once broken. This was done by the Mahsud Waziris against whom no expedition was sent. They were subjected to a blockade, coupled with a series of swift blows at the Mahsud's villages. And they soon craved for peace, which was willingly granted. The peace established by him continued even after him in the time of Lord Minto when it was broken only once.

As a result of the new policy a great saving in money was also effected. During the whole period of his administration (1899-1905) Lord Curzon spent only £248,000 on the military movements on the North-West Frontier, as against as much as £4,584,000 expended during 1894-98. And Lord Curzon himself remarked in 1908 : "If anybody had been disposed to doubt the success of the scheme of frontier policy which has now been in existence for ten years, the doubts must have been dispelled...."

### THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE

The foundation of the new policy as discussed above, led in turn to the foundation of a new province on the frontiers, known as the North-West Frontier Province. Since the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the control of the North-West frontiers had been in the hands of the Punjab Government. But this system of control had many defects. It was in fact the Indian Government who were held responsible for the frontier administrations. It was they who declared war and established peace, and were called to account whenever there was a disaster on the frontiers, the public and the Press opinion in England taking no heed of the Punjab government at all. But as against the responsibilities the Viceroy had to bear, he had no direct control of the frontiers, and was compelled to issue orders only through his intermediary, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. The officers on whom everything on the frontiers depended, were not his choice, as they were all appointed by the Lahore government; and whenever a new policy was initiated, it depended entirely on the Punjab authorities how to put it into effect. Moreover, this most delicate matter was placed in the hands of the officers who were already overwhelmed by their internal duties. The matter which had been simple in the initial stages, had now become complicated to the extreme, and all alike had to seek instructions from the Punjab Secretariat the officials of which were ignorant and knew very little about the deep principles involved in the policy. As Lord Curzon himself once remarked, the five successive Lieutenant-Governors and the five successive Chief Secretaries of the Punjab had no political

experience of the frontiers at all. The Punjab government in fact had an instinct to evade responsibility, and its secretariat was nothing better than a post-office which promptly referred every possible difficult question to the Centre as it was referred to it. The situation reached its climax during the frontier war of 1897 when the disastrous conditions prevailed, but the Punjab government due to their utter ignorance of the matter reported the conditions as "reassuring."

Nor were, however, for this all the Punjab authorities entirely to blame. For every measure they had to adopt the final word lay with the Centre, and the matter for them was complicated yet more when the successive Viceroys increased their grip on the frontier problems. If the Punjab government had no frontier policy of their own, we cannot blame them because under the circumstances it was impossible for them to have one. Till recently they had had a creditable record on the frontiers, and now if they failed the reason was that the issue had become imperial, and moreover, because the internal affairs of the rest of the Punjab had now become complicated, it was too heavy a burden for the Punjab government to handle efficiently.

The best solution of the problem was that a new province on the frontiers should be created, which should deal with its special problems directly under the guidance of the Centre. The proposal regarding this had been made much earlier. Lord Dalhousie had a desire to create this province, but he had to abandon the idea because Colonel Mackeson to whom he wanted to entrust the province was assassinated at Peshawar. Lord Lytton revived the proposal in 1877, and his plan was to create a province which should be vast in its territories, stretching to the sea and including in it the territories of Baluchistan. But the outbreak of the Second Afghan War led once again to the abandonment of the scheme. The proposal was revived once again in 1893 when Sir Mortimer Durand brought about an agreement with Amir Abdur Rehman about the demarcation of the political frontier between India and Afghanistan. Lord Lansdowne was in favour of the proposal, but before he could deal with the matter he had to leave India. Lord Elgin revived the proposal once again in 1898. He invited a correspondence from the Punjab government who expressed themselves decidedly against it. Lord Elgin forwarded the correspondence of the Punjab government together with his own views to the Secretary of State. The latter opposed any radical territorial changes at the time, and the proposal had to be dropped once again.

The main objections of the Punjab government to the proposal of creating a new province were that it would seriously disturb their revenue system. It would prevent the Punjab officers from obtaining a training in the frontier problems, and would necessitate some territorial adjustments for which the Punjab government were not ready. Moreover, it was asserted that it would give an impetus to

the Forward Policy which had not shown any good results so far.

Lord Curzon dealt with the question vigorously. He rejected the objections of the Punjab government as entirely irrelevant and useless ; and refused to agree to the proposal of the Punjab government to take away Sind from the Bombay Presidency and hand it over to the Punjab as a compensation for the loss of the frontier territories. Some of the Punjab officials vehemently objected to Curzon's proposal; one of the civil officers of eminence even resigned. But Curzon was not moved.

Securing the necessary approval of his Council and that of the Secretary of State, Lord Curzon created the new province which was to consist of the trans-Indus districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan ; with political agencies of Dir, Swat and Chitral. It also included the Khyber, Kurram, Tochi and Wana ; and afterwards to it was added the cis-Indus district of Hazara because of its chiefly tribal population. The government of the Punjab thus completely lost control on the territories west of Indus, retaining their hold only on the settled district of Dera Ghazi Khan.

The new province which was created included a long narrow strip of level territory beyond the Indus, and the whole of the vast mountainous region upto the frontiers of Afghanistan. Its total area was 38,665 square miles, of which 13,193 square miles were within the administrative frontiers. The population of the province was about four million which was largely Pathan and nearly all Muslim. The new province was inaugurated on King Edward's birthday in 1901, and was named as the North-West Frontier Province ; the North-West Province being renamed as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Thus, as Ronaldshay writes, "amid the pangs of an unusually painful delivery, did the North-West Frontier Province come to birth."<sup>1</sup> The first Commissioner of the province was Lieutenant-Colonel Deane, afterwards Sir Harold Deane. He died in 1908 and was succeeded by Sir George Rooskeppel.

Justifying the creation of the province, Frazer remarked in 1911 : "The rapidity with which frontier affairs are now decided, the vigilance exercised in the suppression of crime, and the better and more intimate relations now existing between the authorities and the frontier chiefs and headmen, form a marked contrast to previous conditions."<sup>2</sup> The credit of Lord Curzon, writes C.C. Davies, "lies rather in the fact that he carried out a reform which had been discussed and generally approved for nearly twenty-five years."<sup>3</sup>

As a matter of fact the whole North-West Frontier policy of Lord

1. Ronaldshay, *The life of Lord Curzon*, II p. 263.

2. Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-77.

3. Frazer, *op. cit.*



Curzon\*deserves nothing but our unreserved praise. Many experts on the matter had declared that Sandeman's method of Baluchistan were impossible to succeed against the Pathans. But Lord Curzon stuck to his policy, and the experiments which had succeeded in Baluchistan did succeed on the North-West Frontiers as well. Lord Curzon was determined not to employ the regular British forces in insecure positions, and was sure that local irregular forces raised for local security would serve the purpose the best. And this proved to be correct. By his policy he not only saved regular soldiers from irregular and dangerous duties, he also saved large amounts of money which had so freely to be poured for the frontier defence. While others merely talked of reforms, Curzon actually carried them out. He "gave India the longest peace upon her North-West Frontier which she has ever known," and the system he devised continued unshaken for long. Curzon himself declared, "I am content with the simple fact that for seven years we have not had a single frontier expedition, the only seven years of which this can be said since the frontier passed into British hands...."<sup>1</sup>

## RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN

Beyond the North-West frontiers, Lord Curzon's relations with Afghanistan, however, were not as successful as desired. Abdur Rehman, the ruler of Afghanistan with whom Lord Curzon had already made his acquaintance before he arrived in India, had been brought to the Afghan throne with the help of the British after the Afghan war in 1880. The Amir had been assured by the British that they intended no interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan ; that in case of a foreign invasion the British would come to the Amir's assistance ; and that he would get an annual subsidy of £80,000 so long as the British cordial relations with him continued. The above assurances were repeated and accepted once again in 1893 when the Durand agreement was signed and the Amir's annual subsidy was increased to £120,000. Although there never was signed a formal treaty in this connection, the Amir's foreign relations were conducted through Great Britain, and Russia was repeatedly informed that Afghanistan lay beyond the sphere of her influence.

The main principles of the British policy towards Afghanistan were that they wanted to retain that country as a buffer state, and it was their honest interest that Afghanistan should remain strong enough as to resist any foreign aggression.

For all this, however, the Amir showed absolutely no gratitude to the British. He accepted the British money, but always tried to keep them at an arm's length. He even disliked to correspond with the

Government of India, and asserted that his dignity required a representation at the Court of St. James, for which purpose his son Nasrullah Khan was actually sent in 1895, though he had to face nothing but disappointment. His letters to the Government of India were frequently in an important vein; towards the closing years of his life he considered his army strong enough to expel any Russian invasions of its own, and desired that the British should help him only with arms and money. He throttled trade between India and Afghanistan, and frequently intrigued with the tribes on the British side of the frontiers; having played not an insignificant role in the risings in Tirah.

Despite all this, however, he fulfilled his pledges with the British, and his relations with the British remained neither very good nor very bad. The Amir had been permitted to import the munitions of war through the British India under the Durand agreement; and he availed himself of this permission to such an alarming extent that some of his supplies had to be detained in India, which, however, Lord Curzon released after his arrival in this country. Abdur Rehman died in October 1901.

After his death, his eldest son Habibulla ascended the throne, which raised some fresh issues of a complicated nature and high importance. According to Frazer the defence agreement between Abdur Rehman and the British had been purely of a personal nature, and in no sense could it be considered dynastic; "nor could it be so in a semi-barbarous country where the death of the ruler was sometimes the signal for bloodshed among rival claimants to the throne." And the same applied to the question of subsidy. The latter question however was solved when Habibulla studiously refrained from drawing the subsidy; but the former grew complicated when Habibulla declined various invitations to visit India and renew the old agreement. He asserted that the agreement was dynastic, and the death of his father had not therefore terminated it in any sense.

The matter became serious when the new Amir began to leave a great deal of power into the hands of his brother; himself sometimes taking on part in the state business at all. The discipline in his troops also began to deteriorate; and yet more, he was rumoured to be developing a strong leaning towards Russia, though no definite proof could be forwarded in this connection. Despite all this he strongly contended his right to import munitions of war through India; and he asserted himself to be as strong as the Japanese monarch. A complete deadlock in relations between the Amir and the British was reached in 1904 when Lord Curzon left for London on leave and Lord Ampthill was appointed as the acting viceroy.

When the repeated British invitations to visit India were declined by the Amir, with the approval of Lord Curzon and the Home

Government Lord Ampthill sent a Mission to Afghanistan under Dane. The Amir expressed his willingness to receive the Mission, and offered to send his son Inayatulla Khan, then 16, to pay the return visit. The reason for the Amir himself refusing to visit India may be clear from his utterance in a public Darbar which he held on 21st August 1906 after the receipt of an invitation from Lord Minto. He said : "Before this Lord Curzon also invited me to India, but his letter was a threat that the subsidy would be stopped if I did not obey the summons.. it is therefore quite clear...I was determined never to go...The attitude adopted by Lord Minto, however, is so friendly and from motives that I cannot possibly hesitate to accept the invitation."

The son of the Amir did visit India towards the close of the year 1904, but it proved to be of no political significance at all. Nor did the Mission sent to Afghanistan bring out any good results for the British. The Mission led by Dane reached Kabul on 12 December 1904. It expected to remain in Afghanistan for not more than a fortnight, but the dealings of the Afghan Government with the Mission were so discouraging that it had to remain there till 29 March of the next year. The Amir acting in a very diplomatic manner, treated the Mission with perfect courtesy at personal interviews and in private notes; but conducted his negotiations only by letters and his official correspondence was always insolent. The Mission was left in a comparative isolation, few Afghans of note ever visiting it. The Mission in fact was treated as if suppliant at his gates. The purpose of such a treatment towards the Mission perhaps was to impress upon his people his own importance and greatness; for the whole city knew that the Amir had declined a visit to India despite the repeated British requests, and that the British had now at last sent a mission to him.

The object of the Mission had been twofold : firstly, to settle with the Amir his outstanding differences with the British, and secondly, to sign with him a treaty renewing the relations of his father Abdur Rehman. Dane carried a draft treaty in his pocket which the Amir saw but proposed to draft the treaty himself, which he did in an ornate Persian. There were differences between the two drafts. Whereas Dane in his draft implied a series of engagements on the old lines, the Amir expressly provided in his draft for the continuance of the agreements which the British had made with his father. In his own draft the Amir also for the first time conferred upon himself the equivalent of "His Majesty". Three weeks thus passed in this exchange of notes, but still no conclusions could be reached.

Nor could the Amir alone be blamed for this stiff attitude. There, indeed, had already been a precedent in which the treaty signed with Dost Muhammad had held good with his successor Sher Ali without any specific renewal. Yet, however, the Government of India's views too could not be rejected as wholly unreasonable. There is no doubt that in a country where civil wars were common and one dynasty

changed after another, the British treaty with the Barakzai dynasty should have bound them to many unknown possibilities. Nor was the rule of Habibulla himself supposed at this time to be very secure. His brother who controlled much of power, was said to be aspiring for the throne himself. Moreover, from the old precedents the Amir claimed what suited him the best, while he rejected as unreasonable what was against his professed interests. The sum of £400,000 which had accumulated in subsidies since the death of his father, was claimed by him as his birthright; and so was the privilege of importing the munitions of war through the British India. He refused to consider these questions as being in dispute. While on the other hand he would tolerate any British control over his foreign relations the least.

The negotiations continued for long, and there seemed to be no end to them as both the sides stuck hard to their respective positions. The conditions however changed suddenly towards the close of the month of March when the Mission swallowed the Amir's draft wholesale. The Amir secured all his points and gave the Mission an affable farewell.

Dane claimed that his Mission had been a success. But nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact the Mission accomplished nothing that could not have been done through correspondence. As a result of this Mission the British prestige fell in Afghanistan to its lowest level. And it was realised too late that the Mission "ought never to have been sent."

The Amir himself visited India in 1907 at the invitation of Lord Minto. He was received by the Governor-General first at Agra and then at Calcutta. It was a problem as to where should the Amir receive the title of 'His Majesty', which he had appropriated to himself in the treaty. But the problem was soon solved when King Edward greeted the Amir in a telegram as 'Your Majesty'. This visit of the Amir strengthened friendship between the two Governments, and enhanced the prestige of the Amir.

### THE PERSIAN GULF

The British had been having a very special position on the Persian Gulf, as Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, declared on 5 May 1903, in the House of Lords. He said: "I say it without hesitation, we should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it by all the means at our disposal." And this assertion was repeated in a despatch sent by Sir Edward Grey to the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, on 29 August 1907.

Lord Curzon understood the position well before he became the

Governor-General of India, for he too had already written in his book on Persia : "I should regard the concession of a port upon the Persian Gulf to Russia by any Power as a deliberate insult to Great Britain, as a wanton rupture of the *status quo*, and as an international provocation to war; and I should impeach the British Minister who was guilty of acquiescing in such a surrender as a traitor to his country." And he retained their view after he came to India as Viceroy.

The safety of the Persian Gulf in fact was the safety of India to the British. The British control over the Gulf was necessary, as we have seen in the earlier chapters, because it was a trade route between the United Kingdom and India, and further because the position had by now developed in such a way that the establishment of any foreign interest on the Gulf was sure to be taken in India as a sign of British weakness. Moreover, it was feared that if the British slackened their control on the Gulf in any way, the slave trading and raids and counter raids would reappear.

The situation on the Persian Gulf on the eve of Curzon's arrival in this country was complicated. That was about the time when the Middle East, and particularly Persia and the Persian Gulf, were witnessing an unprecedented activity in international politics. Russia at this time was steadily strengthening her position in northern Persia and was openly planning to construct a Railway line to southern Persia. Russia was in fact taking at this time an unusual interest on the Persian Gulf. On a flimsy pretext of studying plague in the Gulf, the Russian doctors were perhaps surveying the trade routes; and the Russian officers were busy in examining coasts and roadsteads. The British in such a situation could not help feeling perturbed.

Nor was France and the other European countries slack in this respect. The French intrigues going on in Muscat and France was about to secure a coaling station which she needed the least. Germany on the other hand was also trying to push forward the scheme for the Baghdad Railway, and to secure an outlet on the Persian Gulf. The independence of the Sheikh Mubark of Kuwait was threatened by Turkey which wanted to bring that little state under her suzerainty. In fact Frazer writes : "Half the Powers of Europe seemed to be preparing to establish themselves upon the flank of India and to sap British predominance in Gulf waters."

To discuss the activities of these countries on the Gulf in further details, and to study Lord Curzon's reactions, we may first take up Russia. We have seen above how the Russians were taking an unusual interest on the Gulf. In 1899, the year Curzon came to India, *St. Petersburg Vedomosti* published an article insisting that Government should occupy Bunder Abbas and make it the terminus

of the railway that Russia wanted to construct across Persia; and that they should also occupy the islands in the straits of Hormuz : United Kingdom at this time was busy in her serious troubles in South Africa, and Russia tried to take the best advantage of it. Just at this time a small innocently looking gunboat named Giljak stole into Bunder Abbas. The British authorities took no serious notice of it, which they should have immediately done if a great cruiser had done so. The commander of Giljak professing to be in need of coal, the Russian authorities communicated with a Bombay firm which sent them 300 tons of coal in their own steamer. The coal ordered thus was obviously too much for the small gunboat to contain. The Russian officials requested the local governor for his permission to land a part of their consignment, but the latter knowing well that the Russians once having entered would not easily leave; and moreover suspecting their designs, flatly refused the permission. In the meanwhile H.M.S. Pomone also suddenly appeared on the scene and started taking an interest in the matter. The Commander of Giljak realised the situation, and filling his bunkers, stacking his decks and placing the rest of the coal in the native boats and elsewhere, he sailed off. There was no doubt about the fact that Russia by this artless method had desired to establish a nucleus store which later on could have developed into a full-blown coaling station. But the due carefulness of the Government of India foiled her ambitions.

In the meanwhile the Russians were carrying on their activities on other fronts in 1900. A Russian mission carried out its surveys for the construction of the railway in southern Persia, and one of its parties suddenly emerged in Bunder Abbas, while the other carried its surveys on another route as far as Chahbar only about 100 miles away from Baluchistan. The establishment of the Russian consulates at Bashira and Bunder Abbas also could not but be considered with concern. And Lord Curzon kept a strict watch so that the British interests on the Gulf might not in any way be jeopardized.

France was also at this time busy in her activities, and just as Curzon arrived in India the troubles in Muscat due to the intrigues of France, came ahead. When the treaty of 1862 was signed between Great Britain and France pledging jointly to preserve the independence of the Sultan of Oman, the foreign, political and commercial interests of Muscat fell from that time under the exclusive control of the British. Right from that time in order to strengthen their hold upon that state the Government of India had been bestowing many favours upon the Sultan. He was helped by the British by subsidies against rival claims upon his throne, and against internal uprisings of his people, but for which he could not have been able to continue his hold over the state. The present Sultan Saiyad Faisal too had been favourably disposed towards the British, till in



1894 the French established their consulate in Muscat and began to intrigue against the British. The French Consul M. Ottavi was a man of diplomatic genius, and by his slow propaganda he was soon able to arouse the Sultan's hostility towards the British. An announcement was made by *Journal des Debats* in November 1898 that the Sultan had granted the French a coaling station at Bunder Jisseh which was a landlocked harbour about five miles south-east of Muscat. The harbour had an island across its entrance, and was capable of fortification. The British did not take this information seriously, though later on they learnt that the harbour had already been ceded to the French in the previous March. When the enquiry about it was made by the British ambassador in the French Foreign Minister M. Delcasse expressed his complete ignorance about the matter; and there were reasons to believe that the French Government might actually have been unaware of the transaction. Nor was the British Political Agent at Muscat himself aware of it for a long time. There were some other matters which developed differences between the British and the Sultan, and the matter came to a head. The Sultan had imposed some illegal taxes on the British subjects at Muscat, and he refused to compensate them for the losses they had suffered in a rebellion about three years back.

In February 1899 the British Political Resident on the Persian Gulf, Colonel Meade, arrived at Muscat and requested the Sultan to settle the differences. And in the meanwhile Lord Curzon having learnt the Sultan's cession of Bunder Jisseh to the French, he instructed Colonel Meade also to insist upon the Sultan that the cession be revoked. For the support of Colonel Meade, Admiral Douglas was ordered by Curzon to proceed to Muscat in H.M.S. *Eclipse*, the flagship of the East Indies Squadron. And when the Colonel actually failed in his mission, Douglas took charge of the negotiations and threatened to bombard the Sultan's palace if he did not come off at a fixed time to the flagship and accede to all the British demands. The Sultan lost his courage, and he did exactly what was demanded. The grant of Bunder Jisseh was also revoked, and the British were completely satisfied.

Nor can we criticise the British for this harsh action against the Sultan. The Sultan in fact had already entered into a secret agreement with them in 1891 promising not to alienate any part of his territory to any other Power. Still there is no doubt that the Home Government should not have been so harsh upon the Sultan, but for the "promptitude and decision", as *The Times* wrote, of Lord Curzon. It was in fact on the insistence of Lord Curzon alone that demand of the revocation of the grant of Bunder Jisseh was included in the other British demands. And for this the Home Government later on amply endorsed Lord Curzon's action.

In order to soothe French sensibilities, however, the British



gave France a corner of their own coal stone at the entrance to the Muscat Harbour. Colonel Cox was sent by Lord Curzon to Muscat, who by his tact and diplomacy was soon able to make the British relations with the Sultan once again cordial. The British had some other minor troubles with France at Muscat, but they were all happily settled by the Hague Tribunal in 1905.

Now to come to Germany, we learn that she had established a Vice-Consulate at Bushire in 1897 when there were only six Germans to look after. In 1899 she sent a cruiser Arcona to visit the Gulf ports, and it was well known that such visits were always a prelude to some aggrandisement of the Germans. Headed by an important man of Germany, Herr Stermrich, a German Mission arrived at Kuwait in 1900 and requested Sultan Sheikh Mubarak for necessary facilities and concession for the establishment upon the shores of the Kuwait Harbour of a terminus for the proposed Baghdad Railway of Germany. The Sultan however refused the request. And, writes Frazer, "almost the first administrative act performed by Lord Curzon in January 1899 had been to instruct Colonel Meade to conclude an agreement with Mubarak, the nature of which certainly precluded the cession of any portion of his territory to any foreign Power."<sup>1</sup>

Turkey also tried to create trouble on the Gulf by claiming a vague sovereignty over Kuwait and trying thereby to secure her possession. Sultan Mubarak having been weakened in his discomfitures in Central Arabia in 1900, Turkey tried to take advantage of it and sent in 1901 a corvette packed with troops to take possession of Kuwait. When Lord Curzon learnt of it, he also immediately ordered a British cruiser to sail for the scene. On seeing this the Turkish corvette disappeared. Peace seems to have been disturbed when towards the close of the same year the Turkish corvette appeared once again and began to threaten the Sultan. Captain Simons incidentally happened to be at Kuwait at the time; and taking action on his own responsibility, there being no time to secure instructions from India, challenged the corvette which had to depart once again in disgrace. Turkey tried to create more disturbance on the Gulf, but they were all properly met with and the British interests were duly secured.

Bahrein lying near El Katar had some uprisings within its territories in 1904, which the ruler Sheikh Isa was unable to punish. As a result of this the British interests in that small Sheikhdome suffered. Demands were made in a peaceful manner to compensate the British losses, which the Sheikh refused to satisfy. Lord Curzon ordered Colonel Cox to sail with three warships to the scene and do the required. The Colonel appeared off Manamah in February 1905,

1. Frazer, *op. cit.* pp. 78-115.

gave an ultimatum to the Sheikh, and within twenty-four hours all the British demands were conceded.

Lord Curzon also had to face during his time certain troubles on the Persian coast of the Gulf, for instance, at Mohammerah, Bushire—the principal port of Russia, and at Lingah. All these troubles were duly settled, conceding due rights to Persia.

Thus as it is obvious, Lord Curzon took a very keen interest in the affairs of the Persian Gulf, and was careful that it must be protected duly against foreign Powers. It goes further to his credit that he not only resisted the foreign attacks upon the Gulf, he took certain very concrete steps to secure it against any future trouble as well. He recognised the naval importance of Elphinstone Islet, and rebuilt a telegraph station at Henjam previously abandoned, laid there a cable and linked it later with Bunder Abbas. He understood the strategical importance of Henjam and took proper steps to make use of it. The British ownership of Basidu was made more effective. The old surveys of the Persian Gulf were revised and checked and new surveys were made. Three gunboats were specially designated for regular service in the Gulf and large cruisers were repeatedly sent to watch the British interests. Kuwait was for the first time made a regular port of call; and a good deal of scientific explorations were undertaken on both sides of the Gulf. Consular establishments were enlarged, and at some places such as Bunder Abbas new consulates were established. He himself undertook an official tour of the Gulf during the months of November and December of 1903, and increased the British prestige with those small rulers. He in fact “recalled both India and England to a sense of the supreme importance of the Persian Gulf, and made it a separate and vital issue.”

### SOUTHERN PERSIA AND SIESTAN

The British had in fact been interested, not only in the Persian Gulf, but rather in the whole of Southern Persia and those of the Persian territories which adjoined the Perso-Afghan frontier. And of this wide area, Siestan was of a yet greater importance in connection with the defence of the British Indian empire.

The importance of Siestan<sup>1</sup> was in the fact that it lay in the corner of Persia where the frontiers of both Afghanistan and Baluchistan met. Its territory commanded the valley of the remarkable river Helmand, which after traversing 700 miles across Afghanistan lost itself in the vast swamps of the depression which was known as Hamun-i-Aelmund. Its alluvial soil was extremely fertile, and it formed in the past ages one of the granaries of Asia. For centuries

1. This we have already discussed in our earlier chapters see chapters on Mayo.

it was a possession of Persia, and one of her dynasties atleast had their capital within Siestan. The rising Afghans wrested this territory from Persia after the death of Nadir Shah, but the major part of it lapsed once again to Persia. Siestan was thus divided between the two Powers, but the boundaries of the two respective parts remained vague, and hence formed a constant cause of quarrel between the two.

In the time of Lord Curzon the Persian Siestan formed a badly tilled oasis which was about 950 square miles in area and had a population of about one lakh. The great barren region which lay beyond its western borders made this province a place of great strategic value for the British. For an advance into India or Afghanistan, an army marching southward through the eastern Persia once planted here, could easily march onwards and threaten the British existence in this cauntry. And it being the period when every British officer suffered from the sense of the Russian menace in these regions, Lord Curzon had to watch the British interests carefully.

In the sixties of the nineteenth century there had been a bitter boundary dispute between Persia and Afghanistan. Great Britain being asked to settle the dispute, the British foreign office sent a Mission under Major-General Sir Frederic Goldsmid which ultimately gave its award in 1872. This award, however, satisfied neither Persia nor Afghanistan, though both the countries did accept it ultimately. According to this award the river Helmand was fixed as the boundary between the two countries, though all the river above the dam situated at Kobak was given over to Afghanistan.

As luck however would have it, the river soon shifted its course about eight miles westward and thereby altered the great lagoon in size and situation. Regardless of the award however, Afghanistan clung to the right bank of the river, showed a strong inclination to claim both the banks below the dam, and began diversions far above the dam to deprive Persia of her reasonable share of water. The dispute at first local, soon developed its importance and became really serious for the British when M. Miller an astute Russian Consul, arrived in Siestan in 1900 and began to espouse the Persian cause with vigour.

The Persian Government asked Great Britain in 1902, under the treaty of Paris of 1857, to intervene. On the instance of the Home Government Lord Curzon sent Sir Henry McMahon, an experienced frontier officer, to the scene. The Russian Government made several attempts to thrust their own official on the Mission, which were foiled. But the Russians at this did not withdraw. Miller and his brother, a doctor, were able ultimately to persuade Persia to obstruct the work of McMahon in every way. McMahon was thus refused supplies, and once he was even ordered to go back. McMahon,

however, remained firm and kept his restraint despite repeated provocations.

The matter was considerably delayed, and the Mission could start its work only in the month of January 1903, and continued it till as late as May 1905 when it returned to India. Though both sides claimed more territories, and Persia even claimed territories above the dam; McMahon on the whole adhered to the spirit of the Goldsmid award and gave his own decision, which with the efforts of Lord Curzon was ultimately accepted by the two parties, though not wholly.

The McMahon award decided that Afghanistan holding the river above the dam could not do with the whole of its water as she liked. Taking Bandar-i-Khamal Khan, a point about 40 miles above the great dam, and considering the Helmand having entered here the Siestan province as anciently constituted : it was declared that Persia was entitled to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all the water that passed that point, but could divert her share of the water into the Persian Siestan only below the dam. Persia was moreover prohibited from alienating her water rights without the consent of Afghanistan. And it was decided that a British irrigation expert would be appointed in Siestan to see that both sides got their proper share of water.

The McMahon award, as already referred to, was accepted only due to the personal efforts of Lord Curzon, and after a considerable delay. But the proposal of a British irrigation expert was still not endorsed. Lord Curzon, however, established a British consulate at Nasratabad near the dam, and in order to develop trade he developed a trade route through Afghanistan which was in considerable use before he left.

Thus did Lord Curzon handle the Siestan problem and exclude possibility of the Russian influence from that province. The Home authorities had not recognised the importance of Siestan, but Lord Curzon made them to do so, because he "had a strong belief in the possibilities of trade by land with Siestan, and a vivid perception of the necessity of excluding the province from Russian control," writes Frazer.

Besides the above, during the time of Lord Curzon, the British developed some special interests in the customs of Southern Persia, and secured repeated assurances from that country that she would not pledge these to any other Power. In 1898 the Persian Government had pledged the customs of Bushire and Kermanshah as a security against a loan which they secured from the Imperial Bank of Persia, a British institution. The British lent to Persia a further loan

of £ 2,000,000 in 1903 through the same bank, and a yet further similar loan of £ 100,000 in 1904. And for these two loans Persia gave the British the security of post and telegraph revenues, the Caspian Sea Fishery dues and the customs of Fars and the Persian Gulf thereby strengthening the British hold over Southern Persia.

### RELATIONS WITH TIBET

"Lord Curzon," writes Ronaldshay, "was convinced that it was essential in the interests, not merely of India itself, but of the British Empire as a whole, that our authority should be unanimously and, indeed, ostentatiously asserted, not only upto the limits of our own borders, but at every point on the glacis which sloped away from the long perimeter of the Indian frontier, at which hostile influence might otherwise obtain a lodgement." On the other hand, however, the "Cabinet's sole desire was to avoid complications on or beyond the frontier."<sup>1</sup> And this difference between the Cabinet and Lord Curzon made itself openly manifest in the British relations with Tibet.

The Tibet expedition of Lord Curzon was a subject of much criticism from the public. Curzon was blamed of having sent the expedition merely to satisfy his geographical curiosity. He by his expedition, brought misery and death to an inoffensive people. And it was a frustrated attempt at enlarging the Indian boundaries. The impression created by this criticism was more strengthened when differences arose between the Home Government and the Government of India about the Lhasa treaty.

In order to understand Lord Curzon's policy of Tibet, it would be necessary to have a brief review of the past British relations with that country. Though there had been mighty Himalayan peaks beyond Darjeeling, yet they had never been an obstacle to human intercourse. About hundred years before Curzon, a Chinese army even crossed that range and advanced almost within the sight of the capital of Nepal. Tibet in fact was not a poor country as it seemed to be. Its trade was considerable, and could be far greater but for the monkish spirit of intolerance. The country contained perhaps the richest deposits of the placer gold in the world. And it was therefore a natural aspiration of the imperialistic British power in India to have a trade with that country, if not to actually occupy it. But the Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was a barrier before them.

Warren Hastings had sent an envoy to Tibet in 1774-75 to explore the possibilities of trade with that country. But its work was soon undone, and now for a considerable time Tibet was left alone : though in 1783 Samuel Turner visited that country, and in 1811-12

1. Ronaldshay, *op. cit.*, II p. 276. For a detailed study see Mehra, Parshotam, *The Younghusbund Expedition (1968)*.

Manning went and met the Dalai Lama. In 1886 a mission to Lhasa was encouraged, but it failed in such a way that the Tibetans got organised against the British, and under the promptings of the Chinese they invaded the British territories. Marvellous wall-builders as the Tibetans were, in one night they built a wall as long as three miles within the Indian frontiers, and the British had to take serious steps with their troops to expel them from the Indian soil. For more than ten years after that the Tibetans continued "encroaching on our side of the frontier, but not for one day would we permit our troops to remain on the Tibetan side. Forbearance could scarcely go further than this, but yet it was to be still more strained on many a subsequent occasion," thus wrote Younghusband, the leader of the British expedition under Lord Curzon, justifying the British action.

In 1890 the British had started negotiations with China, which culminated the conclusion of a Convention under which the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet was settled and it was provided that a joint Commission should meet to facilitate the trade and communication between these two states. But as the Chinese failed to enforce it upon Tibet due to their weakening influence on her, the Convention came to a naught. The joint Commission however did meet and entered into a further agreement. But it was all useless. The trade mart established at Yatung proved to be unsuitable and useless, as the Tibetans built a wall to prevent their traders from reaching it and levied duties on the Indian goods in defiance of the agreement reached. Above all they repudiated the boundary accepted by China and raised further complications. Thus a complete deadlock was reached when Lord Curzon arrived in India, and all his letters to the Dalai Lama returned unopened. Claude, an experienced political officer, was sent by Curzon for frontier tours to see if the difficulties could be removed. But Claude's mission proved to be unproductive. Nor did the Chinese proposal for a further conference between White, and a Chinese and a Tibetan representative prove of any benefit.

Besides White, Lord Curzon also sent Colonel Francis Younghusband to Khamba Jong on the Tibetan frontier. The Commission lingered on for months during the year 1903, the Tibetan officials who met it were inferior in status, and in the meanwhile the Tibetans utilised the time for their military preparations. China asked for a postponement of the consideration of the matter promising to influence Tibet in the meanwhile, but she seemed quite incapable of doing the latter job.

There were definite reasons as to why the Chinese influence and suzerainty over Tibet had been paralysed, and the Chinese Resident at Lhasa had completely lost its control over the Tibetan affairs. It was for the first time in many decades that the Dalai Lama had grown to manhood instead of dying young like his predecessors, and was therefore desirous of asserting his position. Moreover there

seemed to be some strong hand at his back which was encouraging his ambitions. The Dalai Lama had during his minority a tutor named Dorjieff who was a Siberian Buriat professing to be a Buddhist, but was a Russian subject. This gentleman had developed a great influence during his twenty years of residence at Lhasa, and was received by the Tzar in 1900-1901 as an envoy of the Dalai Lama just at the time when the differences between Russia and Great Britain were getting serious. Dorjieff also brought for the Dalai some presents from Russia, which according to Kawaguchi, a Japanese devotee at Lhasa, included 500 loaded camels, half of them carrying small arms and ammunition.

Dorjieff in fact was playing a double role. At Lhasa he gave the impression that the Tzar was anxious to promote Buddhism and expand the Buddhist empire; while at St. Petersburg he informed the eagerness of Dalai Lama to secure Russian protection. Russia was responsive to this hope and Russian gold was made available to the Tibetans.

When approached by the British authorities, Russia denied the current reports that she had entered into a secret agreement with China for the establishment of her protectorate over Tibet. Yet when the British sent their expedition against Tibet, the Russian ambassador in London protested and this caused considerable unease in British minds. Later on there was an interview between Lord Lansdowne and Count Benckendorff which modified the British impression to some extent. But the continuation of the intrigues of the Russian agents in Tibet sustained apprehensions in the British mind. Nor did Dorjieff himself stop his activities in Lhasa. As late as 1903 Dorjieff was still deceiving the Lama that Russia was at his back. Though there were proofs that Dorjieff's activities were unauthorised by Russia, yet they did create mischief against the British.

If, therefore, the circumstances before the sending of an expedition to Tibet are summed up, we see that Chinese suzerainty over Tibet had almost been extinguished. The agreements concluded between China and British were not recognised by Tibet. Tibet often carried on her encroachments on the British territories, and the British efforts of developing trade with that country had completely been foiled. Moreover, the Dalai Lama was in communication with Russia, and the latter country having not yet been defeated at the hands of Japan, was seriously developing her expansionist designs in Asia.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Curzon approached the Home Government for an action against Tibet. But the Home authorities were hesitant about the matter. For them the German danger was the main consideration at the time, and they rather wanted to befriend Russia. The repeated efforts of Lord Curzon.



made the Home authorities ultimately acquiesce to a mild repressive action.

*The Expedition.* It was on 6 November 1903 that the sanction was given for the expedition to advance to Gyantse, about half the way to Lhasa. The Secretary of State insisted that there was to be no permanent intervention in the Tibetan affairs. The purpose of the expedition was to obtain reparation, and the moment the object was attained the expedition was to withdraw. An army, therefore, marched under the command of Younghusband, constituting a rare expedition which had to move frequently as high as the Mont Blanc. The most important event in the career of the expedition was the battle at Guru which was fought on 31 March 1904 when the Tibetans attacked the tired British soldiers, illunderstanding their spirit and strength for long forbearance. The Tibetans lost about 600 killed and wounded and had a disgraceful retreat. And "it was all over in ten minutes". Gyantse was reached on 11 April, but there was still no sign that the Tibetans wanted to negotiate. Lord Curzon sailed for England on 30 April and the affairs now passed into the hands of Lord Ampthill under whom the treaty was actually concluded.

The surprise attack of the Tibetans on 5 May put the British troops in real jeopardy. The reinforcement came on 26 June under General Macdonald, which changed the situation materially. Jong was captured on 6 July, and two days later the troops marched for Lhasa, though due to some delay on the way that place was not actually reached before 3 August.

Reaching Lhasa, Younghusband discovered that the Dalai Lama had fled from the capital. The negotiations had therefore to be carried with the leading Tibetan officials with less authority. Younghusband found himself in a really perplexing situation. From here it took as many as 12 hours to communicate with Simla, which made it very difficult for him to ascertain the correct views of the Government at an early time. And then on the other hand he had strict instructions that he must leave Lhasa at his earliest. He had the draft Convention sent by the Government of India already in his possession; while he received a telegram from the Secretary of State, Mr Brodrick, whose views differed materially from those of Lord Curzon and his deputies. And to add to his difficulties yet further, the telegram did not explain the Secretary of State's views clearly; Younghusband having received the details in a dispatch only after he had actually signed the treaty.

The Government of India wanted a satisfactory settlement, while the Secretary of State was anxious to conclude the affairs and leave Tibet as early as possible. The telegram required of Younghusband that the indemnity imposed upon Tibet should not be beyond its

power to pay, that if necessary the payment may be spread over three years, and that the occupation of the Chumbi Valley should continue only till the indemnity was paid or until the trade marts are opened for three years, "whichever is the latest." What gave a sort of freedom to Younghusband was the ultimate expression that he was to do as guided by the circumstances, which he interpreted in his own way. The Secretary of State's caution may be understood from the fact that he had already given some assurance to Russia that the British Mission would leave Tibet at the earliest; an assurance which the high Indian authorities considered to be entirely unnecessary.

*The Treaty.* In the Treaty that was ultimately signed, Younghusband fixed the indemnity at 5,00,000 sterling which he believed Tibet was capable of paying, and which was calculated on the basis of the suggestions already made by the Government of India. The Tibetans asked the permission to pay the indemnity at the rate of one lakh rupees (£6666) a year, and fearing that if he did not agree he might have to leave Tibet without even signing the treaty, Younghusband ultimately agreed to this. And this involved the British occupation of the Chumbi Valley for as many as 75 years as a security for the full payment of the indemnity, as against the three years recommended by the Secretary of State. When later on called upon to explain, Younghusband justified the occupation of the Valley for this long time because it was a key to Tibet, and was a tongue of land thrust into India. It was, as he asserted, the only strategical point of some value on the northern frontiers between Burma and Kashmir, and its occupation would not in any way break any pledge. In his own words, therefore, "he seized the golden opportunity" and signed the treaty on the above terms.

According to the other terms of the treaty, trade marts were to be established at Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok. The British commercial agent would be stationed at Gyantse, but he would be empowered to go to Lhasa when required. The foreign policy of Tibet would be completely under the control of the British and Tibet would permit no foreign Power to send its agent to it. Nor would any foreign country be given any concession in Tibet, such as that of the construction of railways, roads or telegraph lines, or the grant of a territory.

This treaty was signed in Potala, the monastery-palace of Dalai Lama on 7 September, and on 23 September the homeward march of the British soldiers commenced.

*Criticism.* The Secretary of State took a serious view of the conduct of Younghusband, and considered his action as a "defiance of express instructions." Some condemned the Secretary of State for taking such a serious view of the matter, and for refusing to consider the real merit of the treaty which conferred so much advantage upon the British. But those who did so forgot that the instructions of the

Secretary of State had been clear, and the permission to be guided by the circumstances did not by any stretch of imagination imply such a great divergence from the plan laid down. Nor was it a good argument to say that the Chumbi Valley was not always in the possession of Tibet, it was a key to that country, was a tongue of territory thrust into India, and that it had some strategic importance for the British in India. The main British danger at the time was the rising ambitions of Germany before which the Home Government was anxious to befriend Russia. The action of Younghusband, there is no doubt, jeopardised the possibilities of friendly relations with the latter country. Moreover, the orders had been issued by the high authorities, and it was no good case for the subordinates to disobey them and then try to justify that all that was done for the interest of the high authorities themselves. The Government of India defended the conduct of their officer, but they too had to admit that he made a serious dereliction of duties.

Russia protested to the Home authorities, and under the order of the latter, the indemnity was promptly reduced to £166,000. Soon there was a change in the Ministry, as a result of which Morley succeeded Brodrick; and the former introduced further changes in the terms of the treaty. The indemnity was to be paid in three years, and the money was agreed to be paid by China, whose suzerainty over Tibet was recognised. Chumbi was evacuated in January 1908, and the British agent at Gyantse was not permitted to go to Lhasa,

The treaty signed by Younghusband had laid down that Tibet would not cede any of her territories to a foreign Power, nor would admit any foreign representative, nor grant other concessions without the permission of the British. But the Anglo-Russian Convention which was signed in 1907 laid down that neither Russia nor Great Britain, was to conduct her affairs with Tibet except through China. And thus both these countries were brought to a status of equality in Tibet.

The net result of the expedition to Tibet was thus only the opening of the trade marts at Gyantse and Gartok, and the appointment of a British agent for commercial purposes at the former place. But these advantages too were not effectively made use of. The real advantage in fact went to China who got her suzerainty over Tibet recognised at the very insignificant price of paying the indemnity to the British. The "expedition of Younghusband was unnecessary and all but fruitless".

For this however, Curzon could not in any way be held responsible. He offered a chance, wrote L. Frazer, and if it "was thrown away by those who succeeded him, the blame does not lie at his

1. Frazer *op. cit.*, pp. 134-146.

door." Still, however, it would be wrong to under-estimate the British gains too much. If the Chinese suzerainty was restored, at least the Russian ambitions in Tibet were put an end to. Though it would be foolish to conjecture that the Russian troops could march into India through Lhasa, yet it could not be denied that the presence of a permanent Russian Mission at the place, so near the Indian borders, was bound to raise some troubles for the British. The Russians could gather the necessary information to be used elsewhere, and they could arouse the Tibetans to create troubles for the British. All such possibilities were eliminated.

Lord Curzon is said to be one of those Governor-Generals of India, whose coming and going both were welcomed. His arrival in India raised strong hopes that his period of administration would be one of those known for the greatest activity and advance in the country. The first expectation was completely fulfilled, as there is no doubt that there was a great activity in the time of Lord Curzon. But the advance being more often negative than positive, here the hopes were belied.

Ronaldshay, one of the biographers of Lord Curzon, calls his hero as being the one who had in him "amazing contradictions and perversities." His character rather presented a paradox by its "pomposity and the simplicity, the aloofness and the sociability, the broad-mindedness and the intolerance, the generosity and the pettiness<sup>1</sup>..." A man of strong energy and never tiring spirits, yet Lord Curzon had the fault of Napoleon, about whom Lord Rosebury remarked : "in all the offices of the State he knew everything, guided everything, inspired everything." And this left the work, sometimes more undone than done.

He was so vigilant in his work and administration that not even the dress of the members of the Council could escape his attention about which he wrote that it should conform to the regulations of Lord Chamberlain. He was a despot who would brook no opposition. There is no doubt that he did introduce some reforms in the administrative machinery, yet his efforts to centralise the administration were disliked both by the English and the Indians.

On the one hand he gave a whole-hearted and a stiff battle to famine and plague that disfigured the face of this country, on the other hand, in the midst of his miserable economy, he held the grand Durbar at Delhi, on which a large amount of money was

1. Ronaldshay, *op. cit.*, II p. 384.

unnecessarily expended, which could well have been used to wipe the tears from the eyes of hundreds of the poverty-stricken men and women of this land.

The most successful men are those who always keep their minds open. But in Curzon was represented one of the typically individualistic and haughty characters of Europe who even after realising the fallacy of their arguments stick to their guns for personal prestige. The question of the partition of Bengal is one of those which he made his prestige issue; and in this particular case his crooked nature was manifest when he tried to play the Muslims against the Hindus when all other plans failed.

Lord Curzon's undemocratic and reactionary policy against the Calcutta Corporation, his anti-national schemes of education and his abolition of the competitive examinations for the provincial services have all been discussed; and in this connection we may quote Henry Cotton, who thus writes : "Lord Curzon had weakened and discouraged the scheme of self-Government. He had officialised the universities and as far as possible the whole system of popular education; he had substituted a system of nomination of Government service in place of competitive examination; and he had announced a practical declaration of race disqualification for the higher public offices."<sup>1</sup>

Lord Curzon had a strong belief in the superiority of his race, and he often asserted that the Providence had entrusted the Indian destinies to the British, and therefore the British alone could decide the methods they would follow; there being absolutely no need of consulting the public opinion. While speaking to the Chamber of Commerce in February, 1903 he thus declared : "If I felt that we were not working here for the good of India in obedience to a higher law and a noble aim, then I would see the link that holds England and India together severed without a sigh. But it is because I believe in the future of this country and the capacity of our race to guide it to goals that it has never hitherto attained that I keep courage and press forward." In the opinion of Lord Curzon, the British knew the Indian interests the best.

In fact, as Dr Ishwari Prasad writes : "His 'ego' sat on his head, blinded him to the signs of a nascent nationalism, obsessed him with the idea of a mission, made him arrogant, and stubborn, temperamentally unfit to rule over the destinies of a people who were pulsating with a new life and a new hope."<sup>2</sup>

Lord Curzon had intelligence, but no sympathetic imagination,

1. Cotton, Sir Henry, *India Old and New*, p. 423.

2. Prasad, Ishwari, *Modern India*, p. 339.

wrote Gokhale. His relations with the Home authorities, which were cordial in the beginning, became soon strained and difficult. His colleagues in India feared rather than respected him. For when he was pleased, he was charming, but when he was displeased, as Sir Walter Lawrence remarked, "he would pursue the victim of his disfavour almost to the point of persecution." He had a tremendous capacity for devotion, and deep affection, and sometimes the death of a friend "would react upon him with all the force of a physical blow," as his tributes to George Wyndham and Alfred Lyttelton, which appeared in *The Times* of 10 June and 7 July 1913 show. Yet, if "he was hurt beyond a given point by anything said or done, no matter by whom, he could neither forget nor would he forgive. He would simply wipe the offender completely and forever from his life." And the only explanation to these contradictions is that he "with his highly strung nervous system was influenced to a quite unusual extent by his environment."

It is, indeed, impossible to withhold admiration from industry so great, pursued with so remorseless and indomitable a determination. Yet, some there will undoubtedly be who will be hard put to it to decide whether most to applaud or to deprecate the vast and breathless activity of his days. "To those whose ideal of happiness lies enshrined in the peaceful quietism of so much of the philosophic teaching of the East, his life can only wear the appearance of a phantasmagoria of unending horror—the life of all lives most diligently to be avoided."<sup>1</sup>

There were serious contradictions, as elsewhere, in his style of speech and writing as well, in which sometimes he "could rise to moving heights of eloquence; yet it was not incapable of glaring solecisms and of plunging headlong in catastrophic descent from the sublime to ridiculous."

'Extremity' in fact was the one word which marked Lord Curzon's character in every walk of life. When he loved somebody, he loved him extremely, and when he hated some one he did so equally well. There is this extremity visible in his relations with the Home authorities, his foreign policy in India, and in his administrative and other internal reforms in this country. It was this which converted his credit into a discredit. Ronaldshay relates an interesting fact in this connection: "Among the resolutions framed...was an instruction that when Viceroy wrote a note for a despatch his exact words should be adhered to by the clerk whose duty it was to prepare the draft." A later Viceroy, having sporting proclivities, remarked on proposals coming to him regarding the breed of the Burmese pony which were desired to be preserved, thus: "I agree. The Burma pony is a damned good little piece of stuff." And with a conscious regard for

2. See Frazer, *op. cit.*

the rule, the office clerk drafted as follows : "Sir, I am directed to inform you that in the opinion of the Governor-General in Council Burma pony is a damned good little piece of stuff etc."<sup>1</sup>

Despite his defects however, and his being a mixture of the both good and evil, Lord Curzon does deserve our unreserved appreciation in some fields of his activities. His works against famine and plague, his efforts to reform the Indian agriculture, his construction of railway lines and other such reforms, his North West Frontier Policy, and his relations with some foreign countries justify the words of Roberts that whatever "errors, whatever failures..... Lord Curzon's name will stand amongst the foremost of those that make up the illustrious role of the Governor General of India."<sup>2</sup> Curzon had a religious faith, which despite his temperament, secured him success. He had a confidence in himself, and thus wrote about him a man who knew him well : "George Curzon is the only man I know who could make a speech in his pyjamas without looking ridiculous."

Curzon returned to England in 1905. Six months after, Lady Curzon died and although he got a seat in the House of Lords as Peer for Ireland, he took little interest in politics for quite some time. In 1911 he was promoted to Earldom and in 1915 appointed Lord Privy Seal in the Coalition Ministry. He succeeded to the titles of his father in 1916, had another marriage in 1917 when he became Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords. The First World War over, Curzon attended the Paris Peace Conference as Foreign Minister. He was created a Marquess in 1921. He suddenly fell ill and died in London on 20 March 1925.

1. Ronaldshay, *op. cit.* II p, 385.
2. Roberts *op. cit.*, p. 340.



## Earl of Minto, 1905-10

Gilbert John Elliot-Murray-Kynyn-Mound who later became 4th Earl of Minto, was born on 1 July 1845. He was the son of William Hugh, the 3rd Earl, and Emma, daughter of Sir Thomas Hislop who commanded the Army of Deccan in 1817-18 in the Third Maratha War. The 1st Earl of Minto had been the Governor-General in India between 1807-1813. Gilbert John had a rich and varied experience in his career before he was appointed as the Viceroy of India in 1805 to succeed Lord Curzon. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, at 19 he entered the Scots Guards, acted as a war correspondent in Spain, was A.D.C. to Sir Frederick Roberts during the Second Afghan War under Lord Lytton, commanded a regiment in Tibet in 1882, married Mary, the grand-daughter of the British Prime Minister Lord Grey in 1883, and succeeded to the titles of his father in 1891. He was 53 when in 1898 he was appointed Governor-General of Canada. Here he remained till 1904 and proved himself a successful and popular administrator.

Shortly after his retirement from Canada, his appointment as Governor-General of India in succession to Lord Curzon was announced. "From 1905 to 1910, Indian administration was directed by John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, and Minto, the Viceroy, both of outstanding ability and tact, who as a team presented the strongest elements of English political thought. Those were the years in India when the pre-Gandian national leadership was at its highest formative phase. ...The battle of politics was fought, and out of the crucible finally emerged a few political trends which began to assume permanent character. Thus, after having existed for twenty years, the Indian National Congress received full recognition to negotiate for national development. The reform proposals, the main issue of the time, suggested continuous progress in the Indian system of government, improved by the application of representation theories. And finally, British acceptance and encouragement of the Muslim demands, based on separatist tendencies, laid the foundation of a political process which culminated in the partition of India."<sup>1</sup>

1. Das, M.N., *India Under Morley and Minto*, London, 1964. p. 7.

## RISE OF EXTREMISM AND THE GOVERNMENT MEASURES

### Causative Factors of Extremism

The year 1905-10 constituted a critical time in the history of India. The Curzonian regime which had preceded the period had proved to be an extremely reactionary one. Curzon's Calcutta Corporation Act was considered to be an attempt to crush the spirit of local self-Government. His education policy was derogatory to the public aspirations and his partition of Bengal was the worst blow to national integrity. His expensive Durbar and effort to over-centralise the administration, all these created a resentment in the public mind. Writing of Curzon's administration Gokhale remarked: "For a parallel to such an administration we must I think, go back to the time of Aurangzeb in the history of our country." Minto also wrote to Morley : "I always feel shy of Curzonian history. There is on the one hand the brilliant ability and hard work which has dazzled people, and on the other hand the dictatorial control of all public affairs, and the petty interference in the merest trivialities of every day life, which must eventually have led to disaster." In his notorious address before the Convocation of the Calcutta University in 1905 Curzon declared that truth was only a western concept, and that, "in the East, craftiness and diplomatic vile have always been held in high repute." Such remarks obviously could not be aimed at winning the sympathies of the people. "Perhaps no single British Administrator in India gave a greater impetus to the national movement than Lord Curzon."<sup>1</sup>

The period between 1896 and 1900 had witnessed the horrors of famine followed by plague and plague followed by famine. Thousands upon thousands died, land was converted into a brown waste and men died creeping in the streets. Women deserted the children and there was despair all around. Everywhere the people blamed the Government for their misery, and the world opinion strengthened their beliefs. The ruthless Government measures against the bubonic plague, violating the privacy of the peoples' home and displacing them and ill-treating them to the extent of ruthlessness. All this had its effect. Ram Gopal writes: "The whole proceedings resembled the sacking of a conquered town by the enemy."<sup>2</sup>

The Government had given certain promises to the people in the Royal Proclamation of 1858 and earlier in the Charter Act of 1833. But a failure to fulfil the promises made the people desperate. The Council's Acts of 1861 and 1892 were considered only half hearted measures which

1. Lady Minto (Mary Countess of) *Minto & Morley*, p. 232; Coatsman, p. 35; Annie Besant, *How India wrought for Freedom*, pp. 383, 427-28.
2. Ram Gopal, *Lok Manya Tilak*, p. 137.

could not satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people. The elected element had been introduced in the Councils by the Act of 1882 but it was negligible and in a roundabout manner. The members of the Council could move no resolutions nor could they ask supplementary questions. The budget could not be voted upon item by item. Lajpat Rai remarked: "After more than twenty years more or less public agitation for concessions and redress of grievances they had received stones instead of bread." And again: that "the British democracy was too busy with its own affairs...that the British Press was not willing to champion Indian aspirations... they would have to strike a blow for freedom themselves."<sup>1</sup> "The Government by creating the Legislatures had opened a kind of political theatre," write George Schuster and Guywind. "The deep peace which settled on India in the 19th century, the racial transformation, the rise of the middle class, the University education, improved communications, a political press—these made a climate in which there burgeoned a political life quite unlike that of India's past."<sup>2</sup>

There had been a large increase in the urban population as a result of the development of educational and industrial centres in the cities and towns which were at the same time the centres of political awakening. The failure of the industrial development to keep pace with the development of education had brought about a large scale educated unemployment, and consequently a large scale disaffection. The development of the new industries such as textile and tea, and the establishment of banks, the growth of commerce etc., all these gave birth to a new industrial class. But this new class had, right from its inception, as K.E. Krishnan writes, "to fight against commercial discrimination. They had to fight against competition of foreign capital. They had to fight against free trade."<sup>3</sup> The Industrial Revolution in England indeed sapped India of her economic stability, her raw-materials were shipped abroad, while her markets were dumped with cheap English industrial products.

Nor was the newly-born class of wage-earners in the newly established factories, transport, plantations etc., going to put up with the highhandedness of the imperialistic government. The general strike of the Textile Workers of Bombay in 1908 on the arrest of B.G. Tilak showed the way the wind was blowing.

The Press in India was also developing with large strides. The freedom of Press established in 1882 had brought about a great change in India's political thinking. And after the dissatisfactory Act of 1892 several of the newly founded papers had become so

1. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, pp. 158, 169-70.
2. Schuster, George and Wint, G., *Indian Democracy*, pp. 90-92.
3. Krishnan, K.E., *The Problem of Minorities*, p. 146.

violent in criticism of the British administration that Minto had to write to Morley thus: "I am afraid we must consider seriously how to deal with the Native press, for in many cases the utterances of newspapers are outrageous."<sup>1</sup>

Another factor which influenced the atmosphere in India was the utter humiliation suffered by the Indians settled abroad. The imperialistic and economic exploitation of the British as Dr Tarak Nath Das writes, had forced some enterprising communities, particularly from Punjab, to seek means of employment outside their country. They migrated to Burma, Malaya States, Hong Kong, China etc. The high remunerations and profits available in Canada and the United States of America attracted these enterprising communities thither as well. The number of the Indians migrating to other countries increased everywhere and by 1914 reached as high as 20 lakhs. The infiltration of the cheap Indian labour affected American Labour agitation for higher wages in 1906 and 1907, with the result that American workers began to despise them. In 1906 the Canadian Legislature passed the Immigration Act to control the influx of Asiatics into that country. In 1907 the British-Columbia Legislature dispossessed the Indians of their right to vote, and in 1908 their municipal franchise was also taken away. The South African Government described the Indians in their Statute Books as "semi-barbarous Asiatics or persons belonging to the uncivilized races of India." The failure of the British Government to extend protection to these Indians and the heroic fight of Gandhi against the racial discrimination of South Africa gave considerable impetus to the nationalist movement in India. It is these Indians abroad who later on organised the Ghadar Movement which spread the fire of disaffection against the British.

There was also the influence of the revolutionary doctrine of the West. The violent struggle for independence in France, America, Italy, Germany, Egypt, Russia, Persia and Turkey, and the heroic deeds of Garibaldi and Mazzini could not go without affecting the minds of the educated Indians. "There can be no doubt," writes Lajpat Rai, "that Indian Nationalism is receiving a great deal of support from the world forces operating outside India. On the political side it has been inspired and strengthened by the forces of European Nationalism—the struggles and success of English proletariat, the sufferings and the eventual triumph of the French revolutionists, the efforts and victories of the Italians, the continued struggle of Russians, Poles, Finns, Hungarians and others."<sup>2</sup> Sir Henry Cotton wrote: "The people of India have caught fire from patriotic instincts which are animating the world around them."<sup>3</sup>

1. Lady Minto, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

2. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, p. 232.

3. Cotton, Sir Henry, *New India, India in Transit* p. 210.

Nor could the tremendous consequences of the victory of Abyssinia over Italy and that of Japan over Russia<sup>1</sup> be over-estimated. The myth of the invincibility of the West was shattered, and a greater confidence began to be breathed by people all over Asia. Lord Minto himself remarked: "All Asia was marvelling at the victories of Japan over a European power. Their effects were far reaching. New possibilities seemed to spring into existence, there were indications of popular demand in China, in Persia, in Egypt and in Turkey. There was an awakening of the Eastern world, and ...India...had not escaped the general infection."<sup>2</sup>

Then, the closing years of the 19th century had witnessed a period having its uniqueness in the history of India. There were the movements of religious revivalism which dug up the buried glories of India's past and brought them out into the sunshine of India's reawakened consciousness. Swami Dayanand and Vivekanand, the poetic expressions of Mrs Annie Besant, they all sent a thrill into the nerves of Indian and shook her from the slumber of despondency. The greatness of India's ancient culture and political thought retold in militant language had an effect. Annie Besant, wrote V. Chirol, "has openly proclaimed the superiority of the whole Hindu system to the vaunted civilization of the West."<sup>3</sup>

Then there was the racial superiority which the Europeans exercised over the Indians that developed antagonism among the people and weakened the foundations of the British rule. The main causes of the racial hostility in India lay in the facts that the Englishman never bothered to come into closer contact with the people, the English population in India was transient and looked ultimately to home, the improved communication lured them to go home on every feasible opportunity and consequently they could not win the sympathies of the people they ruled. "The race doctrine had dominated the Western mind from the beginning of the European hegemony over the East, but its continuance into the twentieth century was incompatible with the general awakening among Eastern people."<sup>4</sup> Minto himself admitted in 1908 that "the atmosphere of every day life is electrically charged and that racial antipathies have been dangerously inflamed."

The Indian National Congress was affected by the atmosphere. In its Benaras session of 1905 it placed before itself as goal the type of Government existing in the self-governing colonies of the British.

1. See Dua, R.P., *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese (1905) War on Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 1966.
2. Modi, Homi, *Ferozeshah Mehta*, Delhi 1967, p. 177.
3. Chirol, V., *Indian Unrest*, p. 369.
4. Das, M.N., *India under Morley and Minto*, London 1964, p. 23.

It demanded immediate reform in the legislative councils. But its methods still remained moderate and could not satisfy the aspiration of the new generation of the Indians which had drunk deep from the golden stores of the English literature of political freedom and liberty. It is in these circumstances that the extremist element began to grow in the Indian National Congress. It openly appeared in its session of 1905 while in its session of 1906 the rupture between this element and of the old Moderates could be prevented by Dadabhai Naoroji only with skill and tact, but, the ultimate split could not be postponed for long. In the Surat Session of the Congress in 1907 it did come, when the Moderates being in majority met in a separate convention. They set up a committee which met at Allahabad a few months later and drew up the Congress programme in clear words. The draft ran like this :

“The objects of Indian National Congress are the attainment for India of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by self-governing members of the British Empire and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members.”

“These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means, by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration and by promoting national unity, fostering public spirit and organising the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country.”<sup>1</sup>

This clear declaration of the ends and means by the Congress expelled the Extremists from its folds, though certain sober of them like Lala Lajpat Rai still remained behind. Some Moderate papers went to the extreme, in denouncing the activities of these Extremists. One of them thus said, “Tilak had been feeding the flames which have burnt the Congress to ashes. He is not a patriot, but a traitor to the country and has blackened himself. May God save us from such patriots.”<sup>2</sup>

The activities of the school of extremists to which Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Paul and Lala Lajpat Rai belonged, deserve our special notice. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's brilliant writings in his paper *Kesari*, and his declaration that ‘*Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it*,’ gave inspiration and infused courage in many hearts.<sup>3</sup> He trained people physically as well as mentally. For the former purpose he organised gymnasiums where people had their exercises and prepared their muscles. While for the latter, clubs were organised. *Kesari* moved among people, and the festivals of

1. See Vajpeyi, J.N., *The Extremist Movement in India*, Allahabad, 1974.

2. See *ibid*, pp. 84-134.

3. See D.V. Tahmanker's *Lokmanya Tilak*, pp. 37-43.

Ganapati—the God of War—and Shivaji shook them from their slavish slumber. For his activities this hero of the people was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. But a Bal behind the bars was as great a guide to freedom as the cyclonic Bal moving in the dust and sun of the Indian villages. Nor was the part of Bipan Chandra Paul less significant. He condemned the activities of Lord Curzon's regime as reactionary and aimed at nipping the nascent Indian nationalism in the bud. Curzon's Universities Act he termed as a well-planned blow to the liberal Indian spirit; and his partition of Bengal he termed as imperialism run amuck. He organised protest meetings and inspired the Indians to meet Curzon's ill-planned strategies with force. The anarchical murders of the Europeans and the destruction of their property that took place, were no less an effect of Paul's activities.

The land of the Five Rivers, the Punjab, gave birth to its lion, Lala Lajpat Rai who moved like a hurricane and roared against the British regime. When he spoke on platform, he emitted a fire of political disaffection. He taught the people the lessons of self-help and the arts of honourable life. Lord Minto wrote to Morley: "We have had some curious information too of communication from Lajpat Rai and other agitators with the Amir..If he was in league with sedition in India, supported by the frontier tribes, we should be in a nice dilemma". Actually there were riots in Lahore and the atmosphere reverberated with the national love rarely witnessed before. "Everywhere", Minto wrote, "the Extremists openly and continuously preach sedition, both in the press and largely attended public meetings convened by them". And under such circumstances, he wrote to Morley again regarding Lajpat Rai, "it shows how immensely important his friendship is to us,"<sup>1</sup> which could perhaps be secured with a new reform scheme.

Drawing a distinction between Gokhale and Tilak, writes Dr P. Sitaramayya: "Gokhale was a 'Moderate' and Tilak was an 'Extremist'. Gokhale's plan was to improve the existing Constitution; Tilak's was to reconstruct it. Gokhale had necessarily to work with Bureaucracy; Tilak had necessarily to fight it. Gokhale stood for co-operation where possible and opposition where necessary; Tilak inclined towards policy of obstruction. Gokhale's methods sought to win the foreigner; Tilak's to replace him. Gokhale depended upon others' help; Tilak upon self-help. Gokhale looked to the classes and intelligentsia; Tilak to the masses and the millions. Gokhale's arena was the Council Chambers; Tilak's forum was the village *mandap*. Gokhale was on a level with his age, Tilak was in advance of his time."<sup>2</sup> Tilak was tried in June 1908 in connection

1. Lady Minto, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-55.

2. Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, p. 99.



with some of his writings and deported for six years.

There were other extremists like Har Dayal, Ajit Singh, and Parmanand. Har Dayal was a brilliant young man of scholastic habits who had got himself imbued with a determination for national independence when he was yet a small boy. He belonged to Delhi and was educated there in the St. Stephens College where he came into contact with Amir Chand. After his brilliant academic career in Delhi and Lahore he got a state scholarship in 1905 for studies in St. Jones, Oxford, but threw up his scholarship in 1907 and devoted himself thenceforth actively to the revolutionary activities of his countrymen, anticipating Gandhi by about ten years by preaching boycott. "Those were the days of the Tillakites and the fire-brands of Bengal," as Dr Raghuvanshi writes.<sup>1</sup> Pandit Nehru records his experience when he was a student at Cambridge : "We met Bipin Pal in one of our sitting rooms. There were only a dozen of us present but he thundered at us as if he was addressing a mass meeting of ten thousand. The volume of noise was so terrific that I could hardly follow what he was saying."<sup>2</sup>

Those were the days when books on violence were sold in thousands and read in tens of thousands. Terrorist activities spread, there were riots at Lahore and Rawalpindi. Desai writes: "Extremists revived the memories of the Vedic past of the Hindus, the great phase of the reigns of Asoka and Chandra Gupta, the heroic deeds of Rana Pratap and Shivajee, the epic patriotism of Laxmibai, the Queen of Jhansi, and leader of 1857. The worship of Kali, Durga and Bhawani were preached. And there was a boycott of government services, honours and titles and of foreign goods." An Englishman of Calcutta thus wrote : "It is absolutely true that Calcutta warehouses are full of fabrics that cannot be sold. Many Marwari firms have been absolutely ruined, and a number of the biggest European houses have had either to close down their piece-good brands, or to put up with very small business."<sup>3</sup>

Fire and violence spread all over the land, and the seditious ideas approached even the Indian Army. Several instances were quoted of the persons like Gokhale who were said to be in secret touch with the army personnel. Inflammatory leaflets were circulated among the soldiers and there were proofs of reasonable correspondence with Russian officers. According to Sir Michael O'Dwyer the investigations in Panjab showed "that among those implicated were many members of the Arya Samaj." Alarmed by the deportation of Lajpat Rai, one

1. Raghuvanshi, V.P.S., *Indian Nationalists Movement and Thought*, p. 129.

2. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Autobiography*, p. 22, Quoted, Raghuvanshi, *op. cit* p. 129.

3. See Desai, A.R.P., *Social Background of Indian National Congress*, pp. 307-344.

of its prominent members, a deputation of the Samaj waited upon Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Governor, in May, 1907 to convince him that the Samaj as a body was purely a socio-religious having no connection with politics. The Samaj also published a resolution to this effect. But the Government did not seem to have been convinced, as according to O'Dwyer while the Samaj did not include more than 5 per cent of the Hindu population of the Panjab, the enormous proportion the Hindus convicted of the political offences were its members. And according to a report published in the *Tribune*, Sir Ibbetson himself said that while he was pleased to receive an assurance from the Samaj, nearly every District Officer had informed him that wherever there was an Arya Samaj, it was the centre of "seditious talk". The fact seems that whereas the Samaj as a body may not have been interested in politics, its centres offered convenient meeting grounds where people came in contact with those who individually or through some other organisations were interested in politics and were anxious to throw off the foreign yoke.

Sporadic attempts at violence were made. In April 1908 thus a bomb was thrown at Muzaffarpur in the carriage of Mrs and Miss Kennedy, wife and daughter of Mr Pringle Kennedy, a European advocate. Miss Kennedy was killed and Mrs Kennedy mortally wounded. In December 1907 an attempt was made at Muzaffarpur again to wreck a train carrying Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. B.C. Anand, the District Magistrate of Dacca was seriously wounded by a revolver shot. In November 1908 a student named Jitendra Nath Rai Chowdhry was arrested after his cold blooded attempt to assassinate Sir Andrew Fraser. In July 1909 Lieutenant Colonel Sir W. Curzon—Wyllie was assassinated at the Imperial Institute London by an Indian named Madan Lal Dhingra. In November 1909 an attempt was made to take the lives of Lord and Lady Minto as well at Ahmedabad. In December the same year Jackson, the Collector of Nasik, was shot dead by a Brahmin youth in revenge for his part in the conviction of G.D. Savarkar. In the same month a bomb was sent in a parcel addressed to the Deputy Commissioner at Ambala. Khan Bahadur Shams-ul Alam the Deputy Superintendent of Police in the Bengal Criminal Investigation Department was shot dead in the High Court, Calcutta, in January 1910. The Government of India suspected that the Extremists had organisations inside the French pockets in the country.<sup>1</sup> There was sufficient evidence of their being financed by individuals and organizations in America and some countries of the West.

**Government Reaction :** What was to be done in these circumstances ? Curzon had not been a realist, and just when the Congress was developing its popularity among the Indian people, and in 1901 organised its work in Great Britain itself, Curzon remarked : "While

1. See Das, M.N. *op. cit.*, pp. 104-120.

I was myself sensible of the desirability of consulting and conciliating public opinion in India, the composition of the Congress, at any rate in recent years, had deprived them of any right to pose as the representative of more than a small section of the community. My belief is that the best men in the Congress are more and more seeing the hopelessness of their cause, and indeed many of their papers have begun to argue that they had better trust to me to give them as much as I can instead of wasting their energies in clamouring for what no Viceroy is likely to give them at all." Minto judged the things rightly when he remarked : "I think it is a mistake to attempt to ignore the existence of the Congress. The section of the population it represents will never, I am convinced, possess the grit to play a leading part in the Government of India as a whole, but it does represent Indian advanced thought on many subjects which must affect the future administration of the country, and it will be the greatest mistake to attempt to set the Congress aside and to refuse to have anything to do with it as a factor in the present history of India."<sup>1</sup> Minto realised, that the permanence of the British rule in India rests "upon a sound appreciation of the changing conditions which surround us", and for this he recognised the existence not only of the Congress, but also its two groups, the Extremists who had left it, and the Moderates who still controlled the organisation. He had a lengthy correspondence with Lord Morley, the Secretary of State and evolved a strategy.

The new strategy that Minto evolved to meet the situation was based on three fold action. First, the Extremist element within and outside the Congress should be ruthlessly suppressed. Second, the Moderate element within and outside the Congress should be placated as far as possible. Obviously this could be done by taking certain steps to meet the demand of the Congress as expressed in its resolutions. Third, while placating the Moderates, steps should be taken so as not to permit it to gather strength and become too formidable. Morley, the Liberal Secretary of State for India agreed with Minto on his second proposal, but was not prepared to go with the Viceroy too far on his first and the third proposals. Minto, however, stuck to his programme, and while on the basis of his first proposal, he adopted several repressive measures to control the revolutionary activities in India; on the basis of his second proposal, certain further steps were taken to develop local self-government, and the Minto-Morley Act of 1909 was passed to enlarge the Indian Legislatures and to give them more powers; and following his third proposal he encouraged the formation of the Muslim League as counterpoise to the Congress and tried to set up the Indian princes, a third force, as a counterpoise to both.

By way of repression of the Extremists, Sections 124A and 153A

1. Das, M.N. *op. cit.*, pp. 167-89.

were added to the Indian Penal Code, and the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act was passed in 1907. The Explosive Substances Act came into being in 1908, and the same year witnessed the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act which was meant for the special trials of the terrorists. Many Extremists were arrested, tried and punished. Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh were deported.

Ruthless measures were adopted to curtail the freedom of Press. In 1906 the *Punjabi* of Lahore was punished under section 153 of the Indian Penal Code, its editor being condemned to imprisonment and fine. Similar treatment was meted out to *Hind Swarajya* of Bombay under Section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Other papers which suffered under the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Penal Code were *Vihari*, *India*, *Hindustan*, *Bande Mataram*, *Sandhya*, *Yugantar*, *Kesari* etc.

In 1908 the Newspaper (Incitement to Offence Act) was passed with an object to putting completely out of existence such of the papers as incited murder and encouraged violence under the Explosive Substances Act of 1908, as the Law Member himself said.

Under this Act the district magistrates were empowered to confiscate a press which had printed some matter giving incitement to violence. When a magistrate had a doubt, he could call upon a press to explain why the step should not be taken against it. And if the reply was not satisfactory and the magistrate was convinced of its crime, he could direct the police to execute the order and attach the press and its other property. In case of emergency the attachment orders could be issued even without any show-cause notice. The appeal against the action could be made to the High Court within 15 days of the order. The Act also empowered the Local Governments to declare the declaration of the printer and publisher made under the Act of 1867 null and void.

It was a very harsh measure, as obvious from the very face of it. It aimed at killing the growing sense of political independence and national integrity. Some papers such as *Sandhya* and *Yugantar* were actually killed, and the rest cried under the heavy weight of British despotism.

The Government was still not satisfied with the powers they had gathered. Therefore the Indian Press Act of 1910 was passed. The Section IV of this Act defined the objectionable matter as the one aimed at intimidating people to contribute money for revolutionary activities; seducing persons from the defence forces; preventing or intimidating persons from giving evidence against those in revolutionary activities; and criticising the acts of Indian princes, public servants, executive and judicial officers. And it was the Local Governments and not the Courts which would decide whether a particular

writing violated the Section IV or not.

Under this Act a magistrate could demand a minimum of Rs 500 and maximum of Rs 2,000 as a security from the new keepers of Press and papers. And the Local Government could demand Rs 500 minimum and Rs 5,000 maximum for the same purpose from the already established printing presses and newspapers. These deposits of security could be dispensed with at the discretion of the Government. The Customs Offices and Post Offices were empowered to detain a packet which they doubted as containing objectionable printing matter, and send it to the Provincial Government. In case anybody violated the Section IV above described, his security deposit would be confiscated; and if he desired to start anew, he would be called upon to deposit another security with the Government. An appeal against the executive action lay in the High Court, which was to be heard by a special bench of three judges.

Once passed, the Local Governments made a vigorous use of it, more particularly during the war; and by 1919 penalised as many as 300 papers, 350 presses and 400 publications. From the 300 papers above mentioned, a security of as much as 40,000 was demanded; and it was estimated that as many as about 200 printing presses and 130 papers did not start because of the security deposits demanded from them. Among those which suffered the most, were the papers such as *The Tribune*, *The Hindu*, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Hindvasi*.

The provisions of the Act were in fact such as no words could be too harsh and no criticism too bitter to offer against it. Several cases were brought before the judges, in some of which very severe strictures were passed against the Act. It was a humiliating Act against the intelligentsia to demand security before a crime; though an appeal to High Court was permitted, the latter had no power to question the executive discretion; and under this Act, the accused had to prove his innocence, and thus the Act violated the very first principle of jurisprudence : remarked Justice T.V. Seshagiri Ayyar in a case, "The application of the Section IV was so wide that even if a press appointed a special supervisor, there was a possibility that due to the slightest carelessness something would escape which would destroy the whole career of the press as well as its employees": Justice Abdul Rahim. "Then, the Judge was authorised only to set aside either the appeal or the forfeiture, he could not modify the forfeiture order in the slightest degree : "Sir Alfred Kensington, the Chief Justice of the Punjab Chief Court in *Ghulam Qadir Khan vs. The Crown*. "The Press Law went even beyond the Criminal Law so that where the latter was not violated, the first was". Chief Justice Jenkins and Justice Stephen in *Mohammad Ali vs. Emperor*.

It was considered as the second Gagging Act aimed at destroying

the Press, and agitation against it was natural. But it was only in 1922 that the Repeal and Amendment Act was passed in the light of the recommendations of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru Committee. Under the new measure, the Act of 1910 was repealed.<sup>1</sup>

### THE MINTO-MORLEY REFORMS ACT, 1909

While adopting repressive measures against the Extremists, under the strategy adopted by Minto, the Moderate element inside and outside the Congress had to be placated. In 1907 Lord Morley appointed a Royal Commission with Sir Charles Hobhouse as its chairman to investigate into the causes of the unrest in India and make recommendations for the improvement of the financial system. The Commission submitted that the revenue once assigned to the provinces should not be interfered with by the Centre. And that the distribution of revenues should be made on the basis of the provincial needs, and not haphazardly. Some more of the Divided Heads should be provincialised, and large fixed assignments should be substituted by definite shares in revenue heads. The provinces should be allowed to impose provincial taxes only with the Central approval. They should be given greater powers in land revenue settlement, and the Civil Accounts Code should be liberalised.

With regard to Rural Boards also certain recommendations were made by the Commission in 1899. The introduction of the elected members had been recommended by Lord Ripon's Resolution, and they had been introduced in the District Boards. But these elected members were in some provinces elected by lower boards out of their own members, and the latter being all nominated : "The electors such as they were and where there was any election, were only 6 per cent of the population." To remove this anomaly, the Decentralisation Commission recommended measures that the number of the really elected members should be increased everywhere. Acting under this recommendations, Assam, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa introduced the elected majority in their Boards, while C.P. and Madras raised the elected element to 2/3 and U.P. to 3/4. Yet, however, Bombay did not introduce the elected element at all. Another recommendation of the Commission was that the District Boards should be permitted to levy extra cess of one pice per rupee of land revenue, to extend light railways and tramways in their respective territories. And this was done.

Another reform measure of the time of Minto was his decision in 1907 to reduce progressively the export of opium to China, till it was completely stopped. This was on humanitarian grounds, for which the Chinese Government had been making repeated requests, and

1. For further details see Natarajan, S., *A History of the Press in India*; Rau, M. Chalapathi, *Press in India*.

for which an agitation had been started in England as well. The ultimate abolition of this trade involved a loss of revenue between 8 and 10 crore rupees a year. But the loss was well worth suffering, for the trade in this article only corrupted the peoples' morale.

More important measure of Minto's time, however, was the Indian Councils Act, or the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909.

After a lengthy correspondence with the Secretary of State, Minto appointed a Committee under Sir Arundale to recommend constitutional reforms in the country. The Committee submitted its report in October 1906 which was discussed in the Viceroy's Council, and then sent to the Secretary of State. Minto wrote to Morley: "The time is getting on, and we must arrange a plan of campaign as to our reforms, not only as to the nature of reforms themselves but as to how and when we are to launch them." Morley sent back the report to be referred to the local governments for public criticism. And in the light of all these, the Bill was finally drafted, and after the approval of the Cabinet, passed by the Parliament in February 1909.

### Provisions in the Act

"The Indian Councils Act of 1909", writes Rawlinson, "while introducing no revolutionary changes, took India along the first stage of the road to self-government."<sup>1</sup> Dealing first with the Central Legislature, the Act enlarged its membership to 69, of which 37 were to be the officials, while the remaining 32 would be non-officials. Of the officials, 9 were to be the ex-officio members consisting of the Governor-General, the 6 ordinary members of this Council, and the two extraordinary ones, i.e., Commander-in-Chief and the head of the Provincial Government where the meetings of the Council were held: while the remaining 28 were to be nominated by the Governor-General. Of the 32 non-officials, the 5 were to be nominated by the Governor-General, while the remaining 27 were to be elected.

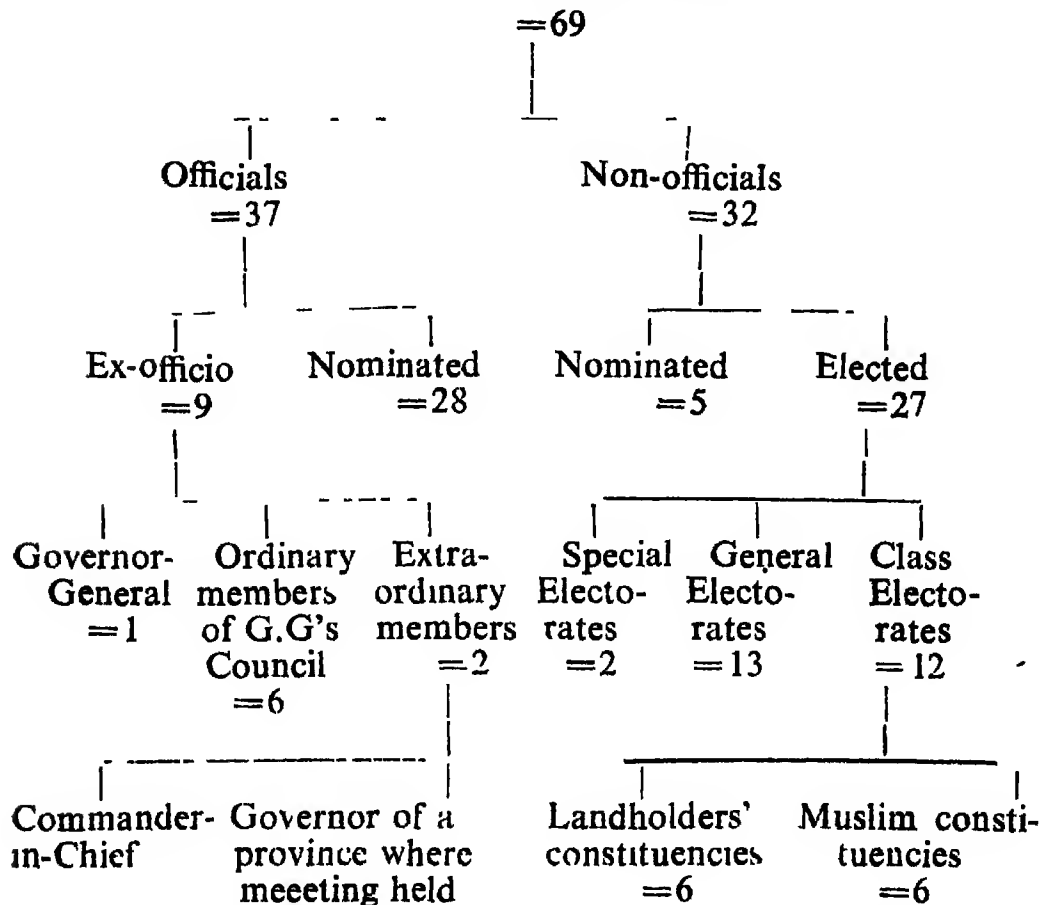
Regarding the elected members, it was declared that the territorial representation did not suit India, and that: 'Representation by classes and interests is the only practicable method of embodying the elective principle in the constitution of the Indian Legislative Councils.' Thus, of the 27 elected members, 13 were to come from the General Electorate which consisted of the non-official members of the legislatures of Bombay, Madras; Bengal and United Provinces each of which would send two members (=8); and the non-official member of the legislative councils of Central Provinces, Assam, Bihar and Orissa, Punjab and Burma each of which would send one member (=5). Of the remaining 14, twelve were to come

1. Rowlinson, *The British Achievement in India*, p. 225.



from the Class Electorates; six of them coming one each from the landholder's constituencies in the six provinces of Bombay Madras, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Provinces and the Central Provinces; and six being returned by the separate Muslim constituencies—one each from Madras, Bombay, United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa (=4), and two from Bengal. The remaining two were to be returned from the Special Electorates, one each from the Bengal and the Bombay Chambers of Commerce. The following sketch will make the matter clear :

#### Total Members of the Imperial Legislature



Membership of the provincial councils was also enlarged: The membership of the Executive Councils of Bengals, Madras and Bombay was thus raised to 4, and the Government was empowered to constitute councils for the Lieutenant-Governors as well. The membership of the Legislative Councils of the different provinces as enlarged, was to be as follows :

Burma.....	16
East Bengal and Assam...	41
Bengal.....	52
Madras.....	47

Bombay.....	47
United Provinces.....	47
Punjab .....	25

The Act provided for non-official majority in the Provinces. But this did not signify a majority of the elected element. Since some of the non-official members were to be nominated by the Governors, through their help the official control over the Council was kept. Thus for instance in Madras the number of the non-officials was 26, while that of the officials only 21. Of the non-officials, however, only 21 were elected, while the remaining 5 were to be nominated by the Governor, who therefore were bound to help the officials, raising their strength thereby to 26. Similarly, the number of the elected members in Bombay was only 21 out of total strength of 47.

The elected members in the Provincial Legislatures were to be returned by different constituencies. Thus for instance in Bombay out of the 21 elected members, 6 were to come from the Special Electorates which would consist of the Bombay Corporation, the Bombay University, etc ; 8 were to come from the General Electorates which would consist of District Boards, Municipalities, etc and the remaining 7 were to come from the Class Electorates which would consist of the Muslims—4, and the Landlords—3.

Besides the above members, it was also provided that in case of need the Governor of a province could nominate one or two experts for advice on particular subjects.

The functions of the Legislative Councils, both Imperial and Provincial, were also greatly increased. Now the members were given the right to discussion and supplementary questions; the Member-in-charge for the latter being authorised to demand time if he could not give an information asked for immediately. Detailed rules were laid down concerning the discussion of budgets in the Imperial Legislature. Members, though not empowered to vote, were empowered to move resolutions concerning additional grants to the local governments, concerning any alteration in taxation, or concerning a new loan which might have been proposed in the financial statement or the explanatory memorandum. The financial statement, it was further provided, before its submission in the Council, had to be referred to its committee which would consist of the Finance Member—acting as its chairman; one half of its members being non-official and the other half nominated by the Government.

Rules were laid down concerning discussion of matters of general public interest. Members could discuss these matters, moving resolutions, and could also vote; though the President was empowered to disallow the whole, or a part of such resolution without forwarding any reason. Nor was the Government obliged to accept such

resolutions, even if passed, whether concerning public interest or concerning financial statement.

The Act also imposed certain restrictions within which the members had to work. They, for instance, could not discuss the foreign relations of the Government of India and its relations with the Indian princes. They could not discuss a matter under adjudication of a court of law, nor could they discuss a matter which was not within the legislative competence of their respective council. Similarly, they could not discuss expenditure on State railway, on interest or on debt etc. Certain heads of revenue were also excluded from their power of discussion.

### Significance of the Act

The Councils Act of 1909 was a significant improvement in certain respects on the Councils Act of 1892. In the provinces, a non-official majority was provided for, and though it could not prove much useful because of the nominated non-officials always siding with the Government, the principle of the non-officials was asserted, and the time could not be far behind when it would be actually realised. The principle of election also came more clearly on the surface. And though many restrictions were imposed and due to the reason mentioned above the elected members could not assert their position, they did secure opportunities to place the public opinion before the Government, while the latter could explain their own policy with a greater assurance that their explanations would reach the public. Further, the new Act brought a new spirit under which two Indians—K.G. Gupte, a Hindu civilian, and Syed Hussain Bilgrami, Chief Adviser to the Nizam of Hyderabad—had in August 1907 been appointed by Morley the Secretary of State for India to his Council; S.P. Sinha, the Advocate General of Bengal had been appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council; and under which the Indians now secured greater opportunities to secure more. Discussions were now more fully thrown open, the right to ask supplementary questions was no insignificant achievement, nor was the grant of the right to move resolutions less important. There were certain restrictions imposed on the members, but correctly remarks S.R. Sharma: the constitutional autocracy that was set up, "was bound to find its autocratic side challenged by its constitutionalism, and an answer had to be found for that challenge. Autocracy was likely to go overboard."<sup>1</sup>

Still there were defects in the Act which were too glaring to overlook. The greatest defect of the Act was the introduction of communal electorates for Muslims by which, according to Jawaharlal Nehru, a "political barrier was created round them isolating them

1. Sharma, S.R., *Constitutional History of India*, p. 281.

from the rest of India and reversing the unifying and amalgamating process which had been going on for centuries."<sup>1</sup> For the so-called political importance of the Muslims, they were given a special representation through exclusive suffrage, instead of giving the opportunity to fight from the general electorates and secure representation on the national basis. Not only this, for their so-called 'services to the Empire,' they were accorded a representation in excess of their population. But the game did not end here. The special treatment accorded to the Muslims invited the resentment of other communities who claimed to have rendered greater services to the Empire, but who secured no such consideration. Sikhs thus fought for their so-called rights and secured special representation in 1919. The consideration given to the Sikhs was a signal for other communities to intensify their agitation. Everybody began to feel his interest threatened at the hands of the others, and ran to demand a special security. Brahmins cried in Madras, the Harijans, the Indian Christians, the Europeans and the Anglo-Indians could not lag behind. The national unity forged through centuries was broken up with one blow, and everything began to scatter away. "The Minto-Morley Reforms have been our undoing," Mahatma Gandhi said. These reforms brought the centrifugal passions from the lower strata of Muslim life to its surface, reducing the advanced nationalist Muslims to the uncomfortable position of unrepresented individuals. This obstructed the intellectual and political advance of the Muslims themselves on the one hand, while on the other hand the bitter seeds of strife and communal antagonism were sown which germinated and ultimately led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947 as a separate State.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was the Act aimed at giving any parliamentary Government to India. Morely frankly declared in the House of Commons: "If I were attempting to set up a Parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it...If my existence, either officially or corporally, were prolonged twenty times longer than either of them is likely to be, a Parliamentary system is not at all the goal to which I would for one moment aspire."<sup>3</sup> If the consequences falsified the assertion, it was no fault of Morley. His intentions were clear. To the newly born nationalistic forces it was going to be no source of satisfaction. Their disaffection grew.

The qualifications prescribed in the Act for the candidates also left much to be desired. There was a sense in debarring the officials, the unsound minds, the dismissed Government servants and those who were not British subjects or were under 25 years of age, from standing for elections; and this was rightly done. But it hardly

1. Nehru, J., *The Discovery of India*, pp. 295-96.

2. Bannerjee, A.C., *op. cit.*, pp. 269-70.

3. See Coupland, *The Indian Constitutional Problem*, p. 34.

sounded reasonable to prescribe for Bombay, Madras and Bengal for instance that in these provinces no one could stand for election to the Provincial Councils unless he was a member of a Municipality or a District Board. The qualifications for election to the Council of the United Provinces were different from those for election to other Councils. Possession of property was a necessary qualification. Those standing from the class constituencies such as *zamindars* had to satisfy certain additional conditions. And the worst provision was that the Government could debar any person from seeking an election, and thus could exclude from an active politics whomsoever they disliked.

Nor was the franchise uniform or broad-based. A Muslim graduate of five years standing for instance could vote, while a non-Muslim graduate even of twenty-five years standing could not. A Muslim, again, paying land revenue or income-tax on a total yearly income of three thousand rupees could vote, while a non-Muslim paying an income-tax even on a yearly income of more than a lakh of rupees could not. The franchise varied not only between communities, but also within a community itself. The qualifications of the Muslim votes, for instance, varied from province to province. And one who was qualified to vote for a Provincial Council, was not necessarily qualified to vote for the Imperial Legislature. Similarly the franchise varied between classes, and within a class as well. A landlord empowered to vote in one province, was not necessarily so empowered if he belonged to another province.

Then, only privileged and moneyed classes could vote, while the educated classes got almost no representation. The narrowness of the franchise is revealed from the fact that in certain cases the total number of voters in a constituency did not even reach the figure ten. In the largest of the constituencies the total number of the voters did not reach the figure 700. The total number of the non-official members in the provincial councils who had to elect as many as 13 members to the Central Legislature was less than 200. The votes being few, they could easily thus be influenced and purchased, and this made the election system a farce.

Nor did the Act afford any relation between 'the supposed primary voter and the man who sits as his representative in the Legislative Council,' as the Montagu Chelmsford Report of 1918 agreed. A man who came in the Central Legislature sometimes left the primary voter too far behind. In Bombay, Madras and Bengal, for instance, the village and the town rent-payers acting as the primary voters, elected members to the local Boards and Municipalities. The members of these Boards and Municipalities elected members to the Provincial Councils. And the non-official members of the Provincial Councils elected members to the Imperial Legislature.

If the Act of 1909 left much to be desired, the regulations made under it took away much of even that little bit which the Act professed to have given. In one of their resolutions passed in connection with these regulations, the Indian National Congress expressed its resentment that in the Punjab the numerical strength of the Council was not such as could make the different classes adequately represented, that the elected element in this Council was inadequate, that the special minority protection afforded to the Muslims elsewhere was not afforded to the non-Muslims here, and that the regulations were made in such a manner as to entirely exclude the non-Muslims of the Punjab from the Central Legislature. Surendra Nath Bannerjea in fact was constrained to ask : By making such regulations, "is the bureaucracy having its revenge upon us for the part we have played for securing concessions ?"

Nor were the functions and powers permitted to the members of the council such as could afford much satisfaction. They could not discuss certain heads of revenue and expenditure. Their resolutions even if related to public interests, could be disallowed and even if passed the Government could refuse to accept them. Thus the power left to the members was to talk and talk, and that is all. The Report on the Indian Constitutional Reforms aptly remarked : "Parliamentary usages have been initiated and adopted in the councils up to a point where they cause the maximum of friction, but short of that at which by having a real sanction behind them they begin to do good. We have at present in India neither the best of the old system, nor the best of the new. Responsibility is the savour of popular government and that savour the present councils wholly lack."

The principles of election and nomination both were mixed together in such an intricate manner that whatever benefit former could provide was stripped of its utility. In the Imperial Legislature the non-officials were placed in a minority, while the official majority was placed under such constraints that the Government was permitted to enjoy almost autocratic rights. These official members could neither ask questions, nor vote against the Government. They could move no resolutions without permission, and could not even speak so long as the green signal was not given. They stood like a solid rock against which every progressive move of the non-officials struck and broke into pieces. The elected element under the circumstances stood quite helpless. Thus even if the non-official element was now increased, it was all useless.

Nor were the non-officials effective any more in the provincial legislatures where they were placed in a majority. "The European elected members," writes S.R. Sharma, "were as good as officials. The landlords and the Muslims were admitted there for their services to the Empire, and were bent upon improving the

future of their own classes by proving their loyalty still further."<sup>1</sup> Nor were all the non-official members elected. Some of them were nominated who, whether European or Indian, were bound to do nothing but support their benefactors. Thus the non-official majority in the provinces was as useless as the non-official minority in the Centre.

The Central hold on the provinces too was kept intact. The financial powers of the provinces were only insignificant, and the provinces were provided with no executive sphere of their own. "Broadly speaking," writes Masaldan, "the Central Government controlled both provincial legislation, by the requirement of the Governor-General's subsequent assent for the local bills, and provincial administration by requiring information issuing resolutions and instructions and by exercising full control over public servants employed in the provinces. The ultimate supremacy of the Central Government was thus retained intact."<sup>2</sup> Nor was anything done to improve the local bodies which remained as official ridden as ever. The Indians were granted no free admission in the executive councils, and the discriminations against them continued as before.

Yet when all this is said, ultimately we cannot end without saying that in many respects this Act was an improvement over that of 1892, though in certain respects, as in its introduction of communal electorates, it was worse. Its greatest merit was that it developed the dissatisfaction and discontentment of the Indians. And as Dr A.B. Keith writes, it failed "to check the propaganda for self-government."<sup>3</sup>

## COMMUNALISM AND THE MUSLIM LEAGUE

Encouragement of the Muslim communalism and help in the organisation of the Muslim League as a counterpoise to the Indian National Congress was the third principle of Minto's strategy. An early history of the Muslim communalism leading to the formation of the Muslim League in the time of Minto may not be out of place.

"Throughout the nineteenth century the Muslims had played second fiddle to the Hindus. It was they who had been displaced by the British from the mastery of the country. They were suspected by the administration for their part in the Mutiny. They were in consequence inclined to sulk and to go into a kind of retreat. They clung to their Persian culture while the Hindus took advantage of British education.....Thus they got the worst in the competition

1. Sharma, S.R., *op. cit.*, p. 148, Further see Keith A.B., *Speeches and Documents of Indian Policy*, Vols. I and II.
2. Masaldan, P.N., *Evolution of Provincial Autonomy in India*, (1953), p. 13.
3. Keith, A.B., *Constitutional History of India*, p. 232.



between the communities.”<sup>1</sup>

The above words of Sir George Schuster and Grey Wint if not all true of the last quarter of the century, remarkably sum up the general condition of the Indian Muslims in the nineteenth century. The causes of the Muslims sullenness and the British discrimination against them are clear. When the British replaced the Muslims in their rule, to the Hindus it made little difference, rather they stood to gain from the less fanatic and more disciplined British rule. While to the Muslims on the other hand, it was the loss of their very life-blood. No loyalty from them could, therefore, be expected, nor could any faith be reposed in them. And for the British under these conditions, “the only course,” writes Mohammad Norman, “was to crush the Mussalmans and had deliberately adopted policies which had for their aim the economic ruin of Muslims and their intellectual stagnation and general degeneration.”<sup>2</sup>

The Permanent Settlement in Bengal under Lord Cornwallis in 1793 made the first great difference. The Hindus who had previously held only unimportant posts, were raised to the status of landholders. They were thus attracted towards the British and gathered wealth, which otherwise should have gone only to the Muslims who therefore grew sulky if not openly hostile to the British for the fear of them.

Nor were the Muslims very much liked by the East India Company in its civil services, thanks to its distrust and suspicion of them as a community. The army service which had almost been a monopoly of the Muslims during their heyday, was now offered them the least. And in the general professions too the Muslim position could not be enviable, as for instance, between 1852 and 1862, out of the total number of 240 Indian pleaders for High Court, only one Muslim was admitted.<sup>3</sup>

Living still in the glory of their past, the Muslims refused to be treated *at par* with those whom till only recently they had been accustomed to rule. Proud of their own culture and literature, they refused to avail themselves of the educational facilities provided by the British. But since they had no sufficient resources of their own, their literacy growth was stopped. Nor did any fine arts grow in their midst. They thus lapsed into ignorance and backwardness. Their association with the ruling race remained undeveloped, and they remained unlooked after, and uncared for.

Gradually the Muslims grew disgruntled and dissatisfied. The

1. Schuster and Wint, *India and Democracy*. p. 101.

2. See Mohammad Norman, *The Muslim India*.

3. Hunter, W.W., *The Indian Mussalmans*, pp. 165-68.

British were the cause of their unenviable position, and therefore a slow simmering against their rule began to become vocal and come openly into the field. The Wahabi Movement was organised, which though religious in its aims, talked of the Muslims backwardness, and opinions were aroused against the British discrimination towards them. The Movement had started in Arabia towards the close of the 18th century, and was brought to India by Sayyad Ahmed Brelvi. The Movement preached hatred towards foreign rule, and therefore in India, as Ram Gopal writes, naturally developed a "permanent machinery throughout the districts for spreading disaffection against British rule."<sup>1</sup> And this could act as no effective invitation to the British to break their disfavour towards this community.

The Muslim discontentment grew, and it had its best display in the Great Mutiny of 1857 in which they played a primary and the most important part. When, therefore, the Mutiny was crushed, the British reprisal was bound to fall heavily on them. They were persecuted and executed, which developed the gulf yet further. Between 1864 and 1871 five great state trials were held, in which dozens of Muslims were severely punished. At the time of the trial of 1871, the Muslims became so bitter that one of them stabbed John Paxton Norman, the Chief Justice of Bengal, to death, for his severe sentences on Wahabis. And shortly thereafter Lord Mayo was murdered in the Andaman Island, by Sher Ali said to be a Wahabi Muslim.

*To Loyalty and Communalism.* But as the climax of the Muslim bitterness against the British rule approached, certain forces suddenly appeared which entirely changed the course and trend of their attitude. In his book *The Indian Mussalmans* published in 1871, Sir William Hunter suggested that the Muslims were now too weak to rebel, and therefore it would be proper "now to take them into alliance rather than continue to antagonise them." Lord Mayo also had realised the situation, and though he was murdered by a Muslim, it was he who laid the foundations of Muslim loyalty by his diplomacy.

In 1863 the Mohammedan Literary Society was founded in Calcutta by Abdul Latif who opposed Wahabis and propagated loyalty to the British. The trend of the Muslim loyalty towards the British was strengthened by the Muslim differences with the Hindus, which were encouraged by the British. A controversy "appeared in Northern India in the seventies of the 19th century, whether the court language should be Urdu or Hindi. In Bengal the controversy took different form: Muslim leaders demanded that the Bengali language, to be fit for Muslim students, should have an admixture

1. Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims (1858-1947)*, p. 24.

of Persian rather than Sanskrit words."<sup>1</sup>

Out of 2,141 in the services of the Government of Bengal in 1871, 711 were Hindus, while only 92 were Muslims; the rest being all Europeans. Here was an economic discredit which the Muslims had gathered from their antagonism towards the British. The best solution of the problem lay in seeking British favour by peaceful approaches. The Muslim leaders realised this, and the Mohammedan Civil Service Association was formed in 1883 for the purpose. The British welcomed the change and when in July 1885 Ameer Ali presented the authorities with a memorial on the subject, a favourable resolution was adopted by the Government of India, though the problem could not still be completely solved.

New leaders appeared who favoured Anglo-Muslim accord, and among them Sir Syed Ahmed Khan deserves our special attention. A nationalist and a lover of the Hindu-Muslim unity in the beginning, calling the two communities the "two eyes of the beautiful bride that was India", Sir Syed grew loyal to the British. During the Mutiny he helped the British and got as a reward a pension of Rs.200 per month, and several other honours. The Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces said about him: "No man ever gave nobler proof of conspicuous courage and loyalty to the British Government than were given by him in 1857: no language that I could use would be worthy of the devotion he showed."

The loyalty of Sir Syed to the British had no limits and he went to the extent of declaring that one cause of the Mutiny had been that the Hindus and the Muslims in the army had not been kept separate. "If separate regiments of Hindus and separate regiments of Mohammedans had been raised," he said, "this feeling of brotherhood could not have arisen."<sup>2</sup> His suggestion of course was received with gratitude.

In 1864 Sir Syed organised the 'Translation Society,' renamed later as the 'Aligarh Scientific Society,' and through this, step by step, he built up the Muslim loyalty towards the British. He raised a Muslim school at Delhi, which was soon raised to a college, and the declared aim for this was "to make the Muslims useful subjects of the British Crown."

In the meanwhile his contacts with the Hindus also continued, and in the foundation and development of the Aligarh College, the Hindu chiefs gave liberal help in funds. He also associated himself with Surendranth Banerjee's *Indian Association* in 1877, which demanded facilities for the Indians to enter I.C.S. And

1. Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

2. Graham, *Life and Works of Sir Syed Ahmed*, pp. 54-55.

writes Ram Gopal : "About the time of the Aligarh Muslim College took birth, Indian nationalism had mildly begun to express itself especially in Bengal and Maharashtra. Sir Syed's utterances caused hopes to be entertained that in him this nationalism could find sagacity and leadership of a high order."<sup>1</sup>

But it was not long after this that all these hopes were belied, and he was so thoroughly converted that when the All India Congress was organised, he called it a "civil war without arms". In 1888 in league with Raja Shiva Prasad of Benaras he organised the Patriotic Association the aims of which conflicted with those of the Congress. He developed a great fear lest the Hindus should dominate the Muslims both politically and economically. And in this fear he was strengthened by Beck, the English Principal of the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. A new phase of his anti-national and rather anti-Hindu activities commenced, which continued till he died in 1898. And this helped in a considerable measure the Muslim communalism to develop.

Another Muslim leader worthy of mention here was Ameer Ali, who also "first appeared to be gravitating towards nationalist politics, but later he devoted himself exclusively to the promotion of Muslim interests."<sup>2</sup> And no less part was played in this respect by Beck, the Principal of the Muslim College at Aligarh. He did everything to win the Muslims over to the side of the British. The Muslim salvation, he declared, lay only in their alliance with the British. In the beginning, the Muslims opposed him suspecting his sincerity. But he was soon able to influence them. And in 1899 when Bradlaugh brought his Bill in the Parliament for granting representative institutions to India, Beck organised the Muslims and made them to send a memorial that India not being one nation, democratic institutions would not suit this country.

When the Mohammedan Defence Association was formed in 1893 with the help of Sir Syed, Beck was appointed as one of its secretaries. Among the aims of this Association were to support measures designed for strengthening the British rule in India, to prevent the political agitation from spreading among Muslims, to help the Government in maintaining peace, and to foster a spirit of loyalty among the Muslims.

Sir Syed and Beck in fact complemented and supplemented each other, and like Sir Syed, Beck also declared himself openly against the Congress, saying: "Muslims can have no sympathy with their demands. It is imperative for the Muslims and the British to unite with a view to fighting these agitators and prevent the introduction

1. Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

2. *ibid.*, p. 49.

of democratic form of Government unsuited to the needs and genius of the country." Beck continued his communal activities for the Muslims till his death in 1899.

**The All India Muslim League.** All these developments divided the Muslims into two schools, one which opposed the Congress and the other which supported it. On the one side there were the persons like Sir Syed Ahmed who gave birth to the Aligarh Mohammedan Educational Congress in 1886, and became actively antagonised to the Congress. While on the other side were the persons like Nawab Raza Ali Khan Bahadur of Lucknow, who speaking from the platform of Congress in Urdu, in the same year (1886) declared, that "Hindus or Mohammedans, Parsees or Sikhs, we are one people now."

Badruddin Tyabji, the President of the 1887 session of the Congress, tried to win Sir Syed over to the Congress but failed. In 1888 Sir Syed rather founded the United Indian Patriotic Association which was to admit to its membership all communities against the Congress. Beck was made its honorary secretary, and the Association soon became a rallying point for the Hindu aristocrats and landlords.

Despite this, however, the Congress continued getting popular with the Muslims. Its third session was presided over by Badruddin Tyabji. The first Congress was attended by only a few Muslims. In its second session there were 34 Muslims out of 431 delegates. In 1889 the number of the Muslims was 258 as against the total number of 1,889. And in its Lucknow session of 1899, despite the opposite propaganda of some, their number reached 300 out of 789; though the Government ignored the Congress proceedings with regard to the Muslims.

The activities of the communal element among the Muslims continued even after the death of Sir Syed and Beck. Beck was succeeded in his post by Theodore Morrison who played no less important role in this than Beck. Nor did the Government leave any stone unturned to encourage the Hindu-Muslim discord. Curzon played the best part in this respect. His partition of Bengal for instance, professedly for administrative convenience, was supposed to be motivated towards the creation of a Muslim majority province, and towards killing the growing spirit of nationalism. His irresponsible utterances after the creation of the province in the teeth of the nationalist opposition, in which he tried to show the Muslims as the favoured children of the State, encouraged Muslim intrasigence. And when the Hindus and the Congress opposed it, the Muslims were annoyed and this gave a great impetus to the Muslim communal forces.

It is in these circumstances that Minto came, and he did not fail

to see as to where the best British interests lay. When more constitutional concessions for India were being planned in 1906, Archibold, the Principal of Aligarh College who succeeded Theodore Morrison, inspired the Muslims secretly to meet the Governor-General and demand separate electorates. He wrote to Nawab Mohsinul-Mulk : "Private Secretary of His Excellency, the Viceroy, informs me that His Excellency is agreeable to receive the Muslim deputation" And further that the Governor-General should be presented with an address in which "I would here suggest that we begin with a solemn assurance of loyalty. The Government's decision to take a step in the direction of self-government should be appreciated. But our apprehension should be expressed that the principle of election if introduced, would prove detrimental to the interests of the Muslim minority. It should respectfully be suggested that nomination or representation by religion be introduced to meet Muslim opinion... also say...weight must be given to the zamindars. But in all these views, I must be in the background...I can prepare for you the draft of the address or revise it."

And Maulana Azad writes on this : "I am a living witness to the fact when as a result of the agitation of the people, certain reforms were about to be conceded in 1906, the late Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk was sent for, by telegram at Simla...The result of interview was that the Aga Khan who was on his way to Europe had to return from Aden. An address was then drawn by Syed Bilgrami..." Thus, though it is said that the Muslims presented the address, an initiative was taken by an Englishman, and Minto not only approved of it, to be sure, he rather invited Muslim leaders himself to make them submit the address, with the probability of having conceded beforehand what the Muslims were called upon to demand. It was an act utterly unworthy of a Viceroy.

The rest of the business was therefore only a formality. A deputation led by Sir Agha Khan met the Viceroy. The address was presented, and the Viceroy replied : "The pith of your address, as I understand it, is a claim that under any system of representation...in which it is proposed to introduce or increase an electoral organisation, the Mohammedan Community should be represented as a Community...and you justly claim that your position should be estimated not only in your numerical strength, but in respect to the political importance of your community and service it has rendered to the Empire. I am entirely in accord with you."

The British treachery is clear. As a result of Minto's above action, one of the British officials wrote to Lady Minto, the Viceroy's wife : "a very big thing has happened today...It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition." Lord Minto himself confided to Lady Minto that the day was "an epoch in Indian history."

After this Lord Minto insisted upon the liberal minded Secretary of State, Morley, against the latter's desire, that communal electorates should be provided for in the coming reforms. Morley had to agree, though later on he repented, as he wrote to Minto in December 1909 : "I won't follow you again into our Mohammedan dispute... it was your early speech about their extra claims that started the (Muslim) hare. I am convinced my decision was best."<sup>1</sup>

**The All India Muslim League :** When the deputation of the Muslim aristocrats returned from Simla, its members all of a sudden found themselves turned into fullfledged politicians. Nawab Salimullah Khan of Dacca immediately proposed the formation of a separate political organisation for the Muslims. And on 30 December 1906 these Muslim leaders met at Dacca and the Muslim League was founded.

The objects of the party were not declared immediately which, shows perhaps that the founder aristocrats had no clear cut idea. The objects came into shape only later on, and that too not at one time. The objects thus evolved were : (1) that whenever possible, the measures enacted by the Government be supported ; (2) that the interests of "our co-religionists throughout the country," be protected and advanced ; (3) that "the growing influence of the so-called Indian National Congress, which has a tendency to misinterpret and subvert British rule in India" be controverted (4) that scope for public life be provided to Muslim young men of education, "who for want of such an association have joined the Congress;" (5) that loyalty amongst the Muslims to the British be promoted ; (6) that in order to protect the Muslim rights, their views be placed before the Government in a mild language; and (7) that without prejudice to the above, as far as possible, to promote friendly feelings between Muslims and other non-Muslim communities. It is clear from the very objects that the seeds of discord which had already been sown, were now so fully protected that they were bound to grow and fructify. Muslim communalism was given a definite shape, and in this Aga Khan played a very important role.

The first achievement of the founders of the Muslim League was the provision of communal electorates in the Government of India Act 1909, which had already been promised in 1906. This Act, though a constitutional advancement, was a shock to the nationalist forces. It separated the communities, brought up the centrifugal passions from the lower strata of the Muslim life to its surface and reduced the advanced nationalist Muslims to the position of unrepresented individuals. The rising democracy was stabbed, as K.M.

1. See Minto, Lady (Mary Countess of), *Minto and Morley*, pp. 47-48., 123; Das, M.N. *op. cit.*, pp. 147-82, Wasti, S.R. *op. cit.*, pp. 59-88; Azad, Maulana, A.K., *India wins freedom*(Calcutta 1959).



Munshi wrote, and according to Jawaharlal Nehru : "A political barrier was created round them (Muslims) isolating them from the rest of India and reversing the unifying and amalgamating forces which had been going on for centuries." Aptly remarked Mahatma Gandhi : "The Minto-Morley Reforms have been our undoing."

### RELATIONS WITH THE INDIAN STATES

As a part of his strategy, Lord Minto wanted the princes to develop a third force, as a counterpoise both to the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. We may examine the early history of the British relations with the Indian States since 1858, and see how Minto brought about his change.

"The situation at the outset in 1858," writes H. H. Dodwell, "is full of ambiguities, the available information is most imperfect, and the existing treaties either confuse arguments drawn from treaty-rights with others drawn from moral considerations or attempt to show that the relations ought to have been international in character as between independent European states." Within "seven-eighths of the 600 odd states with which the Company's government was in actual or potential contract," the writer continues, "its relations were not and had never been defined." While with "the remaining eighth the Company's relations had once been defined by a series of treaties. The contents of these documents varied greatly."<sup>1</sup>

There were one class of treaties, as with Baroda, Mysore and Oudh, in which the Company enjoyed a full control over the external affairs, besides wide powers of interference in the internal affairs of the states. In the second class of treaties as with the Rajput states, the Company enjoyed full powers on the external affairs, so much so that it was entitled to demand even whole resources of the state in times of war; but had no power to interfere in the internal affairs. And the third class was as with the Nizam of Hyderabad, with whom originally the relations were entered into on the basis of equality, but who was later reduced to inferiority, to accept military protection, surrendering in return the control of foreign policy, and in necessity to assist the Company with a specific force, having no clause at all to deal with his internal authority.

Such was the ambiguous state of affairs when the Crown assumed the authority of Government in British India. Despite their discontentment, however, the princes having rendered a great service to the British in the time of Mutiny, acting as the "break-waters to the storm which would otherwise have swept us in one great wave," the British decided to treat them with consideration, the Queen declaring in her proclamation : "We desire no extension of our territorial

1. *Cambridge History of India*, VI p. 489

possessions." It was decided to interfere in the existing state of agreements the least. While no attempt was made to simplify the "ambiguities of the situation," further complications were avoided, and the existing treaties were confirmed *en bloc*, first in the Government of India Act 1858 and then in the proclamation of the Queen.

It was now declared that the Doctrine of Lapse would not be applied to the Indian States any more, nor was any State to be annexed in any other manner. In order further to restore confidence among the chiefs of India at the wish of the Queen, Canning issued in 1860 a series of *Sanads* to the important princes, assuring them that their rights of adoption had been restored, which would continue "so long as your House is loyal to the Crown and faithful to the conditions of the treaties, grants and engagements which accord its application to the British Government." At the same time, however, the princes were clearly told that the *Sanads* "will not debar the Government of India from stepping in to set right such serious abuses in a native Government as may threaten any part of the country with anarchy and disturbance." This clearly shows that though the intentions to annex any more territories were renounced, the British right and responsibility to maintain peace for the good of the people all over India, including the States, was clearly asserted, or the princes were plainly told that the British were a paramount power, and they drew their power to rule their subjects from them. Although the British renounced any intention of taking away this power from them, yet they were concerned that the princes ruled well. In a strange sense, therefore, though the princes were inferior to the British, they were still responsible members of the Empire. The British were perhaps like elder brothers who could reprimand the younger ones for their mis-doing and see that their subjects were well looked after.

The policy declared by Lord Canning was adhered to firmly by his successors, for which a few examples may be quoted. Troubles for instance occurred in Baroda during 1873-75 in the time of Lord Northbrook. The ruler of the state having died in 1870, was succeeded by his brother Malhar Rao who was incapable and incompetent and therefore the administration of the State began to deteriorate. The Government of India being concerned, as discussed above, appointed a commission to hold an enquiry. The prince protested against such an interference, but the commission carried on its work, bringing ultimately to light several irregularities and cases of corruption and oppression against the people. The ruler was warned to mend his ways and put his administration in order within eighteen months, failing which they would be called upon to take certain serious steps. But the chief instead of mending his ways, was alleged to have attempted to poison Colonel Phayre, the British Resident at Baroda.

Another commission of enquiry was appointed consisting of the Chief Justice of Bengal who was to act as chairman, and three other

Englishmen and three Indians. To the utter embarrassment of Lord Northbrook the English members declared the ruler guilty of the crime, while the Indians found him not guilty. The Viceroy himself, however, was convinced of the ruler's crime, and he should have acted boldly when just this time the Home Government intervened and deposed the prince neither on the basis of the result of the commission's enquiry, nor assuming the allegations to be correct, but on the ground of his "notorious misconduct, gross misgovernment, and incapability to introduce reform". Northbrook acted promptly, and to allay the fear that the Government wanted to annex the State, selected a young boy from another branch of the ruler's family, and appointed him to succeed. The new ruler, however, being a minor the state administration fell into the hands of the British who reformed the system in a short time.

According to Mallet<sup>1</sup>, "The right thing was done but the manner of doing it was questionable, for it not only set an inconvenient precedent but went far to create the very difficult situation as to popular feeling which it was designed to obviate." Yet, however, the princes were now perfectly convinced that the pre-Mutiny policy of annexations had definitely been abandoned, and despite the worst abuses a state was no longer threatened with extinction.

We may quote yet another example in the case of Manipur where the ruler, Raja Sur Chandra was expelled from his state by a rebellion led by his own brother, the Senapati or the commander of the State forces in 1890. Yuvaraj, the heir-apparent, though absent at the time, was alleged to have a complicity in the rebellion. He came back and occupied the throne. Sur Chandra appealed to the British for help, but they refused to do anything for him due to his imbecility, and decided rather to recognise Yuvaraj provided he did away with the Senapati. The Assam Commissioner, Quinton, went to study the situation, but was opposed by the Senapati, and in the fighting that took place some British officers were killed. An expedition soon appeared to avenge the British loss of life, and both the Senapati and Yuvaraj were captured, tried according to law and put to death. Some others who were also blamed of having a hand in the crime, were similarly dealt with under law. But the death of the British officers was held no more valid enough to annex the state. Another boy from the family was selected and put on the throne.

This case also clearly proves how the pre-Mutiny aggressive policy of the British had now been completely changed, and despite the murder of the British officers, mal-administration and other such abuses, as K.V. Punniah writes : "the state is no longer threatened with extinction for the sins of its ruler, but the latter is personally held

1. Bernard Mallet, *Thomas George, Earl of Northbrook* (1908), p. 96.

responsible for these and made to pay the penalty by his own deposition and disgrace."<sup>1</sup>

"The abandonment of annexation was, however," writes Dodwell, "accompanied by an ever-growing closeness of control from the time of Canning to the close of Curzon's administration."<sup>2</sup> The development of railways and the other means of communication, the construction of telegraph lines, the growth of public Press, the necessity of a uniform currency and a uniform policy of customs and excise, and the ever-rising standard of administration in the British India; all this necessitated an increased interference. Besides, the incidents which went unnoticed in the time of the Company, thanks to the ready means of communications and Press, came to the notice of the Government at once, and therefore it was now getting difficult to expect it to stand unconcerned.

Moreover, the policy of non-annexation was conditioned, and it required of the princes a perfect loyalty to the treaty obligations and to the Crown. Lord Canning declared in the very year 1858 : "The Crown of England stands forth the unquestioned ruler and paramount power in India." And this position was asserted from time to time. An official announcement said in 1877; Paramountcy "is a thing of gradual growth...shaped partly by conquest, partly by treaty and partly by usage". The Gazette Notification No. 1700-E, of 21 August 1891 said : "The principles of international law have no bearing upon the relations between the Government of India.....and the Native States." Lord Minto following in the foot steps of his predecessors asserted once again that "the relationship of the Supreme Government to the States is one of suzerainty."

The interference in the internal affairs, rare before the Mutiny, now increased. The British had to watch that the administration of a state was run efficiently, failing which they could depose a ruler as in the case of Baroda above discussed, or could take any other step short of annexation. The construction of railways within the territories of Patiala in 1891 was not considered to be an interference in the internal affairs of the state. and despite the unwillingness of the ruler he was forced to sign an agreement for the extension of railway lines within his territories. In fact the condition in this respect had changed to a great extent, and Pannikar correctly commented : "In coinage and currency, in customs and fiscal policy, in claiming direct allegiance from the subjects of Indian states, in the arrangements of extradition, the paramount power has assumed legal and constitutional rights which have made serious inroads upon the guaranteed prerogatives of the major Indian sovereignties."

1. Punniiah, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

2. See *Cambridge*, VI p. 494.

This policy of interference in the internal affairs and to be concerned with every small incident within it, rather increased to an obnoxious extent in the time of Lord Curzon, who declared in unequivocal terms in 1903 that the "sovereignty of the Crown" is everywhere unchallenged: it has "itself laid down the limitations of its own prerogative." Curzon rather considered the chiefs only as handmaids of the Government and their repeated absence from Durbars was described in a circular letter as "dereliction and not as a discharge of public duty;" which was bitterly resented by the princes. After a lengthy discussion on the question, Pannikar concludes that there "can be no doubt that within the limits set by the agreements that define their relation with the British Government, Indian rulers are sovereigns by every criterion of political science."<sup>1</sup> But Lord Curzon was determined to flout every such criterion and humble the princes to the position of an utter subservience.

The treaties signed by Lords Wellesley and Hastings, and confirmed later on by the Crown, had in fact established the British control only over the external affairs of the states. Yet the British considering themselves a superior civilization, considered it to be the salvation of the people to improve their life according to the British standard; and for this, therefore, the interference was supposed to be a moral duty, which as time passed began to be claimed as a legal duty which they strangely enough asserted to have inherited from the Mughals. The Queen assumed the title of *Kaisar-i-Hind* in 1876 after the death of the last Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah. Lord Lytton held a grand Durbar to announce this, and just after his speech the leading Maratha princes had to rise to salute the Queen under the old Delhi title—*Shah-inshah Padshah*.<sup>2</sup>

The change in the position of the rulers was revolutionary indeed. From the position of equality they were reduced to that of humble subservience. And in the powers they enjoyed, they were rather forced to "acknowledge with gratitude the gracious favours which Her Majesty had been pleased to bestow upon them."

Nor were now the princes considered as a great or small, or as important, powerful and less powerful. In the British eyes now they became all equal, which again was no less than a revolution. In the Durbars held, the Sindhia and the Nizam and other such big states now no more got any preferential treatment. They sat with the petty chiefs, and were treated with them as equals.

In fact under the arrangements that developed after the Mutiny, though the policy of annexations was renounced, the British hold on the princes became very strong. Governor-General, the Political

1. Pannikar, K.M. *op. cit.*, pp. 88-101.

2. See Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*. II, p. 97.

Department and the Residents watched every movement of the princes, and though a Resident offered merely friendly advice in the administration of a State, Pannikar writes : "All those who have direct experience of Indian states know that the whisper of the regency is the thunder of the State and there is no matter on which the Resident does not feel qualified to give his advice."<sup>1</sup>

The British in fact claimed the right to the control, use and grant all titles, salutes, honours and matters of precedent. Without their consent no ruler could accept a foreign title, nor could he himself confer one. The number of salutes a prince was entitled to was fixed by the Government who could abdicate or depose a ruler as in the case of Baroda and Manipur, and could even deprive a state of having its separate coins, as in the case of Baroda, Mysore, Travancore, Alwar, Jaipur etc. And any resistance to an Imperial order was considered as constituting a rebellion, and was dealt with as such.

In successions too, the Crown enjoyed the full control as that of the Company. "Every heir on his succession was installed by an agent of the Government, none was recognised as prince until he had been so installed"<sup>2</sup>. The Dispatch of 1881 clearly said: "It is the right and duty of the British Government to settle succession in subordinate native states. Every succession must be recognised by the British Government, and no succession is valid until recognition has been given."<sup>3</sup>

Nor was the old policy of regarding the military forces of the princes with suspicion abandoned. In 1867, Jayaji Sindhia, for instance, "was desired to disband his military police as exceeding the force he was entitled to keep, and to refrain in future from maintaining masses of men at his capital."<sup>4</sup>

The only exception was that of Gulab Singh of Kashmir with whom a verbal promise had been made not to appoint a Resident in his State.<sup>5</sup> But this exception too could not continue for long. Due to the Russian movements towards the British North-West Frontiers Northbrook insisted in 1873 that Kashmir should accept a British Resident. And in 1885 a Resident was actually appointed.

"The most important matter in which the political authority of the Government has extended," writes Pannikar, "is the claim put forward about the direct allegiance of the subjects of Indian states

1. Pannikar, p. 111.

2. Dodwell, *Cambridge History of India*, VI, p. 496.

3. Parliamentary papers, 1890-91, no. 392, p. 13

4. See Thornton Sir. *Richard Meade*, p. 116.

5. Pannikar, K. M, *Gulab Singh*, p. 132

to the British sovereign." Under this claim, the British were directly responsible for the welfare of these peoples, and for this they could make the rulers do as they desired. The rulers, for instance had no power to life and death, the cases regarding which had to be submitted to the local agents for confirmation. In 1865, thus the ruler of Jabwa was fined Rs 10,000 for mutilating a thief; and in 1892 the Khan of Kalat was obliged to resign for having brutally executed and mutilated some persons for a theft in his treasury.

All the foreign interests of a State were secured only through the Paramount Government. And if there appeared a less change in the external relations of the States, that was so because this subject was already under the perfect control of the British.

*Under Minto.* In the time of Lord Minto, however, a change in the policy took place. In 1906, writes Barton, the first breach in the policy of strict control was made, "when Lord Minto summoned several of the Princes into counsel on the question of the sedition in India."<sup>1</sup> And the policy of friendly co-operation inaugurated by Minto continued till 1947. There were several reasons in fact which necessitated this change. The extremist element in the Indian National Congress and elsewhere in India clamouring for political independence and considering no means, whether violent or non-violent, too bad for the attainment of the goal, was gathering strength. The spirit of nationalism spread in the masses, and the Press made no little contribution in attacking the existing system. Nor was the British position outside India very strong. The modern industrial age and the spirit of democracy were having their effects in India, which threatened the existence of feudalism and princely order. Under these circumstances therefore, the best protection both for the British and the Indian princes lay only in their coming together. And it is towards this that the first step was taken by Lord Minto.

The first definite and official declaration towards the new policy was made by Lord Minto at Udaipur in 1909, in which he said the policy of reading "all the Indian treaties together and of reducing all the states to a single type had been abandoned." The effect of Lord Curzon's autocratic declarations under which a uniform policy towards all was to be followed, was thus erased. And the "foundation-stone of the whole system is the recognition of identity of interests between the Imperial Government and the Durbars and the minimum of interference with the latter in their own affairs."

The British leniency went to such a limit that the princes were even permitted to have mutual consultations and bring their grievances to the Government's notice. The first thing therefore they did was to attack the ever increasing powers of the Political Department.

1. Barton Sir William, *The Princes of India*, 1934, p. 281.



Their airing of grievances led in 1921 to the establishment of the 'Chamber of Princes' which was to work as a consultative body of the Government, and the establishment of which, according to Pannikar, led definitely to the surrender "of one of the most cherished principles of British policy in relation to the Indian states, viz., the refusal to permit joint action, or interest in each other's affairs."<sup>1</sup>

### THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION

In the time of Lord Minto certain far reaching developments took place in the British relations with Central Asia. On 31 August 1907 an Anglo-Russian convention was signed, which disposed of all the points of conflict between the two countries about Tibet, Afghanistan and Persia, and which may here be briefly reviewed.

*Tibet:* The Treaty of Lhasa with Tibet after Younghusband expedition, as discussed earlier, had been signed in 1904, but to this a formal assent of China, the suzerain of Tibet was still required. A convention was held at Peking which concluded in April 1906, and which added two more clauses to the Treaty of Lhasa already signed. One of these clauses bound the British neither to annex any of the Tibetan territories, nor to interfere in its internal affairs. And by the second clause China pledged to impose like restrictions on all other Powers. The inclusion of these new clauses was made possible only as a result of the Secretary of State, John Morley's determination to disentangle the British from the Tibetan affairs as soon as possible, against the strong desire of the Indian Government to stick to the Treaty of Lhasa as originally concluded. It was due to his insistence also that the Indian government had to agree that the indemnity should be paid by China instead of Tibet, and should be done in three years. Again, by 1908 the indemnity having been paid, China requested the evacuation of the Chumbi valley; the Indian government objected arguing that the Tibetans had not carried their part of the commitments faithfully, but on the orders of the Secretary of State the valley had to be evacuated immediately, and thus the British became completely disconcerted with the internal affairs of Tibet.

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 also worked towards the same direction in relation to Tibet. By this convention both the parties bound themselves not to interfere in the internal affairs of Tibet, nor to send their emissaries to Lhasa. Both bound themselves to conduct their relations with Tibet only through China.

After these developments, China established a strong hold over Tibet, practically deposing the Dalai Lama and passing the administrative control of the country into the hands of the Chinese Resident. Peking summoned the Dalai Lama in July 1908, and

1. Pannikar, *Relations of the Indian States*, p. 140.

made him feel an absolute supremacy of China over his country; so much so that on his return to Tibet, the Dalai appealed to the British for help in 1910. Tashi Lama had fled his country and taken refuge in India in 1905-6, and the Dalai did so in February 1910. Lord Minto granted him an interview, but the Dalai vainly made entreaties for help which was not forthcoming; the British being determined not to violate their pledges to China and Russia.

Morley declared that the only aim of Younghusband's expedition into Tibet had been to exclude Russian interest. And that being now completely done, they had no other political interest in that country.

*Afghanistan:* With regard to Afghanistan also the Anglo-Russian convention did not go beyond recognising the *status quo*. Russia bound herself to conduct all her relations with Afghanistan only through the British, while the latter committed themselves not to alter the political position of that country in any way. Both the countries were to enjoy equal commercial privileges in Afghanistan. The clauses relating to Afghanistan in the convention were however to come into effect only after securing the Amir's assent to them, which however, the latter refused. Habibullah, the Amir, had already been unpopular in his country due to his efforts to westernise it, and now to have accepted the clauses regarding the conclusion of which he had not been consulted previously, was bound to injure the popular national sentiment.

*Persia:* The more important subject dealt with in the convention was, however, Persia, where chaotic conditions had been developing since 1805, due to the germinating Western spirit of democracy and constitutionalism among the people, and due to several other causes. The agreement reached between the two countries with regard to Persia, therefore, saved both from unnecessary troubles which were bound to arise so long as their respective spheres of influence in the country were not demarcated.

The convention, though binding the two parties to respect the political independence and integrity of Persia, separated its northern part which the British agreed to be under the Russian sphere of influence, and south-eastern part which Russia agreed to be under the British sphere of influence. The Russian sphere of influence in the north extended in the south to the agreed line which ran through Kasr-i-Shirin, Isfahan Yezd and Kakhk while the British sphere of influence ran northwards upto the agreed line running from Bunder Abbas to Birjand, through Kerman. Each party bound itself not to seek any commercial or political interest in the other's sphere of influence. The special interests of the British on the Persian Gulf were recognised by Russia during the course of negotiations.

The Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 was a very important development which entirely excluded the possibilities of a clash between these two countries on the subjects dealt with here. A serious source of friction between the two was removed, and both recognizing their respective interests and rights distinct from each other, busied themselves in peaceful developments within them.

Minto retired from India in 1910, but after reaching England he took no more part in the political life. He died in March  
1914

## Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, 1910-1916

Grandson of the 1st Viscount Hardinge, the Governor-General of India from 1844 to 1848, Charles Hardinge, later Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, was born on 20 June 1858. His father was the 2nd Viscount Hardinge, and his mother, Lady Lavinia Bingham, was the daughter of the 3rd Earl of Lucan. She died when Charles was only six years old. Educated at Harrow and at the Trinity College, Cambridge, he entered the Diplomatic Service in 1880. He married Hon. Winifred Stuart, the daughter of Henry, the 1st Lord Arlington and the niece of Lord Northbrook who had been the Governor-General of India from 1872 to 1876, in 1890.

Hardinge had a very successful career in the Diplomatic Service, and steadily rose to be appointed in 1904 a Member of the Privy Council, and the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg. In 1906 he was appointed to the coveted post of Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. He developed a close friendship with King Edward VII, and in 1910 he was appointed by Asquith to be Viceroy of India.

### INTERNAL CONDITIONS

*The Grand Durbar.* The first important event of the time of Lord Hardinge was the grand Durbar held at Delhi when King George V visited India in 1911. At this Durbar, besides the distribution of money, certain announcements were made which were of great importance and significance to the people of India. It was declared that the capital of India would be transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, that the partition of Bengal was to be annulled, and that a separate Chief Commissioner would be appointed for Assam. There was some criticism of the transfer of the capital on the ground that Calcutta would fall in importance and that the transfer would involve a huge expenditure. But the merits and the advantages of the transfer, as Asquith asserted, far outweighed any hostile arguments. A

great development of the means of communication that had taken place, made it no longer necessary for the Government to have its Headquarters upon the seaboard. Besides, the town of Delhi had a great historical importance, and from times immemorial empire and this town had been associated together. Moreover, Delhi occupied a central place, and was better suited for the administration of this quasi-federal empire. Sir John Jenkins, the Home Member of the Government of India, correctly held that it "would be a bold stroke of statesmanship which would give universal satisfaction and mark a new era in the history of India." Nor was the annulment of the partition of Bengal less significant. The people all over India had been agitating for it right from the beginning, and the step now taken was a victory for the forces of nationalism; though to no lesser extent did this step alienate the feelings of some Muslims which ultimately had disastrous consequences for the national spirit and unity. It was one of the results of the announcements made in 1911, that at the time of his state entry into Delhi a bomb was thrown on Lord Hardinge on 23 December 1912, which resulted in the Viceroy being wounded.

Lord Hardinge also identified himself with the feelings of the people of India against harassment of their countrymen in South Africa where laws had been passed to limit the rights of the Indian immigrants. Mahatma Gandhi offered Satyagraha against these laws, and this coupled with the resentment of the people of India and their Governor-General, led the South African Government in 1914 to pass the Indian Relief Act, which though not completely satisfying to the Indians, removed some of their grievances. Gandhiji's heart was won over and in the First World War he and India rendered a great service to Great Britain.

*Education.* Another important development of Hardinge's time lay in the field of education. After Lord Curzon, India for years witnessed a continuous agitation. The Russo-Japanese war developed the sense of self-reliance, colleges were thrown under revolutionary propaganda of growing press and platform. Better system of education was demanded, and there was a cry for more funds for higher education and technical and vocational training. Under these circumstances education was transferred in 1910 from the Home Department to a separate Department of its own. Sir Harcourt Butler, the first Education Member of Lord Hardinge's Council, issued in 1913 a resolution which redefined the Government of India's policy towards higher education.

The resolution declared that as India could not possibly dispense with the affiliating universities for long, areas of university control would be limited within every province, which in other words meant that a university would be established in every major province. New affiliating universities for Patna, Nagpur and Rangoon, and teaching

universities for Aligarh, Dacca and Benaras were promised. And though war intervened immediately after and the progress was delayed, yet the expenditure on education from Central, provincial and local sources increased. Thus in 1916-17 the amount expended was Rs 614.10 lakhs, which was more than double of that expended in 1906-7. Within next five years of the resolution universities were established at Benaras, Mysore, Aligarh and Patná. The expenditure on schools and colleges from the private sources such as missionaries and others also increased, and in 1916-17 it reached the figures of Rs 1128.83 lakhs.

### THE MESOPOTAMIAN MUDDLE

When the First World War broke out in 1914, the Mesopotamian Campaign against Turkey was started which was conducted by Lord Hardinge's Government of India. The campaign failed. It was an interesting episode of war, and the Parliamentary Commission appointed to report on it made some important proposals for administrative reforms in India. We may here have a short account of the episode.

"Allah created Hell. He did not, however, find it hellish enough and created Mesopotamia, modern Iraq, and put flies in it," so runs an Arabian proverb. The British interests in the Arab littoral on the Persian Gulf were centuries old. They started with a trade agreement with Persia and steadily developed their influence in the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf areas, as we have already seen, were inhabited by ferocious Arab tribes divided and subdivided into clans, each of which had its own chieftain. They were all under the overlordship of Turkey and subject to Persian interference. Their mutual clashes and piratical activities were not conducive to British trade interests with the result that they had to take up police duties in this area to maintain law and order. Peace in these areas was necessitated by the British imperial interests in India also. A British Company in 1857 proposed the scheme of connecting Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf by rail. The scheme was approved by the Ottoman Government but was never put into effect, with the result that ultimately it lapsed. Had this scheme been put into effect it should have established a route to India shorter than that of Suez canal. Despite the failure of the scheme, however, the British interests in the area did not slacken. In 1901 an Englishman secured certain concessions from the Shah of Persia, under which after about several years of hard work he was able to strike inexhaustible oil sources in Arabistan, which lay in the territories of the Sheikh of Muhammurah, a British friend. From the oil fields in Arabistan a pipeline carried the crude petroleum down to the Abadon island which lies at the head of the Persian Gulf right in the mouth of Shatt-al-Arab. In a short time a new town developed in Abadon with its refineries and tanks controlled by an Anglo-Persian Company, and its importance developed

so much so that the British admiralty started taking interest and bought away the controlling rights in the exploitation of oil in 1914.

Obviously because of all these reasons the British developed vested interests in the area. But in the meanwhile another European power, Germany, appeared and in a bid to have a commercial outlet and develop markets for its industrial goods, it started befriending Turkey at the cost of the British. German diplomats appeared in Constantinople in 1875. They made every effort to foment differences between Russia and the British over Turkey. The Sheikh of Kuwait was sought to be weaned away from the British political influence so as to make him dependent on Turkey. The Turkish claims on the Qatar peninsula, next to the Bahrain island under the British, were encouraged. There was also protest against the trade privileges which the British enjoyed in Baghdad as also along the river Tigris. The purpose of all this diplomatic activity was that Germany should be able to supplant Britain in her political influence over the Mesopotamian province of Turkey.

The German activities were not confined to such diplomatic moves alone. They also tried to arouse religious fanaticism of the people in order to serve their own politico-commercial interests. Kaiser paid a visit to Mecca and began to term himself a Haji. The Sultan of Turkey became his brother and it was broadcast that Kaiser had embraced the Islamic faith. Haji Mohammed Guilliano, as he renamed himself, became the defender of Islam. It was given out that the British were the enemies of Islam and their aim in the Turkish lands was to dig up the Prophet's tomb so as to add his bones to those of Pharaohs in the British museum. All sorts of absurd rumours were spread. It was declared that Kaiser while in Mecca had heard a voice from the Heaven which asked him "Arise and fight and become a saviour of Islam and sword of the Lord," so much so that the gullible Muslim people of the Middle East were told that Germany had developed a giant aircraft which had a powerful magnetic force. This aircraft had visited the capitals of France, Russia and England and had sucked up the French President and ruling monarchs of the latter two countries.<sup>1</sup>

The German influence steadily expanded. A Turkish fire-brand Enver Pasha, who was the War Minister of the country, inducted a large number of German officers into the civil as well as army services of the land. The British officers, wherever they had been appointed in posts of influence, began steadily to be removed and by 1914 it looked as if the Sultan had been completely hypnotised by Kaiser. Not only that, the proposal for a railway to link Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf, which had been initiated by an English company, but which had not been put into effect, was picked

1. Barker, A.J., *The Neglected War, Mesopotamia 1914-1918*, 1967, pp 24-25.



up by the Germans, who secured the necessary concessions from the Sultan, were able to establish direct railway contact between Berlin and Constantinople in 1880 and in 1889 signed a Convention whereby the railway line was further to be extended from Constantinople to the mouth of the Persian Gulf. This shook the British from their slumber and as the First World War broke out in Europe, hasty steps began to be taken to counter the developing German influence in the Mesopotamia.

Towards the end of September 1914 Sir Edmund Barrow, Military Secretary at the India Office put up a memorandum proposing an expedition to the Persian Gulf and the role that India could play in it. He proposed that the opportune moment to send such an expedition had arrived. It had become necessary to checkmate the Turkish intrigues in this area which had been backed by Germany. Besides the occupation of Basra would not only protect the British interests at Abadon but would also encourage the ruler of Kuwait to rally behind the British. The protection of British oil interests at Abadon which played a significant role in the British economy was particularly important. The whole matter was examined at the Whitehall. It was decided that India should be made responsible for the protection of the British interests in the Persian Gulf as also in a part of Arabia which would include Basra. The rest of Arabia was to be looked after by the Whitehall ministry itself. No particular attention at that time was paid to Mesopotamia which though not within the Indian sphere was yet considered within the radius of the Indian activities.

Correspondence between the Government of India and the Whitehall immediately commenced. It was proposed that a demonstration by the Indian Government should immediately be made in the Persian Gulf, though the occupation of Basra itself was not as yet proposed. The Government of India, however, hesitated because they were afraid that such a demonstration would give an impression of an unprovoked aggression against Turkey which might arouse hostile feelings among the Muslims of India. Before the Government of India actually moved, they therefore undertook a diplomatic move to wean away the Indian Muslims from their sympathy with Turkey. The Muslims of India were mainly Shia, who acknowledged Imam Ali. Imam Ali had married Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed and had two sons by her, both of whom were treacherously murdered by the forefathers of the Turkish Sultan. As a result of this the Shias did not consider the Sultan to be the rightful spiritual successor to the Prophet as the Sunnis did. The Shias considered the Shah of Persia to be the rightful successor. This situation was fully exploited by the Government of India. They contacted His Highness Sultan Mohammed Shah, Agha Khan, who had considerable following among the Indian Muslims. Agha Khan made a declaration against Turkey, which, he said "has lost

the position of Trustees of Islam and evil will overtake her. Nothing that Turkey or their German masters can do will ever weaken the loyalty of the Indian Muslims."<sup>1</sup> This having been done, preparations began to be made to despatch troops to the Persian Gulf.

On 2 October 1914, the 6th Poona Division embarked for the Persian Gulf. As the troops appeared in these waters, the original objective of a simple demonstration was now converted into an active invasion and occupation of the strategic places which were necessary to protect the British commercial and political interests in the area. Basra was occupied. The Indian troops marched ahead alongside the river Tigris. Qurna was occupied at the cost of 319 British casualties which included 27 killed. The Turkish losses were heavier and a large number of them were also taken prisoners. Reinforcements were steadily sent from India. In February 1915 Lord Hardinge personally visited the defence lines at Qurna, which set rumours afloat that the British planned to march on to Baghdad, although the British minds had not yet been made up to this effect. On the other hand the loss of Basra instead of weakening the Turkish determination aroused their fanatic spirits against the infidels and they prepared to retrieve the position which they had lost. From Qurna the British marched to Shaiba which was conquered at the cost of 1200 British casualties. Hereafter, Sir John Nixon took up the command in Mesopotamia. Fresh troops arrived from India though they brought no supplies with them and the absence of proper medical facilities was also soon to tell on the British military exploits. The Indian Viceroy and the Whitehall were contacted for the permission to march on Amora. The permission being granted Major General Charles Veva Ferrers Townshend was put in charge of the 6th Division and the troops marched. After a sanguinary battle Amora fell. Another battle at Nisiriyeh established the British hold over that place at the cost of 500 casualties.

Having taken Amora and Nisiriyeh one should have thought that the British purpose of the expedition had been achieved. Basra was occupied, the oil refinery was secured and the proper course for the British now was to call a halt to all the military activities in Mesopotamia. After the battle of Nisiriyeh the Turks had withdrawn 120 miles upstream and were now concentrating at Kut, which signified that a counteraction was not immediately possible. Besides the lack of supplies and medical facilities and insufficient number of troops available also necessitated a caution. Townshend seems to have comprehended the situation when he remarked in his diary : "All the elements demanded by the strategic offences were lacking... and the essential principle of rapidity was, owing to the lack of transport, out of question..." He further added "Having taken Amora and Nisiriyeh we should have consolidated our position in

1. *ibid.* p. 25.

Basra vilayet...only in the event of the success of the Allies in France or Gallipoli—should the strategic offence have been taken in Mesopotamia.”<sup>1</sup> The final word, however, did not lie with Townshend. Superior authority lay with Nixon and he declared that occupation of Kut-al-Imara was necessary because it was a junction of the Tigris and Shatt-al-Hai and therefore had a greater strategic value as compared to Amora. The Government of India acquiesced and the further march was authorised. Another grim battle secured the occupation of Kut also and Townshend thought that now perhaps the limit was reached. He reported with regard to his troops that “their tails were slightly down.” The difficulties of insufficient supplies and the increasing distance from the British headquarters at Basra were getting acute with every step that the British took upstream. In these circumstances Townshend thought it necessary to warn his superior that further advance would be fraught with danger. Nixon, however, was not prepared to listen to such defeatist views. He probably had an eye on the minarets of Baghdad and in a sharp reply informed Townshend that the way to Baghdad had to be opened. It may be interesting to quote the reaction of Townshend, who remarked : “All I do know is that I was determined to carry through the operation if it could possibly be done, and it was my plain and simple duty to carry out the orders of my superior to the best of my ability, although his orders were against my better judgement. Personally, I have no doubts in my mind as to the extreme gravity of the results of this advance, an offensive undertaken with insufficient forces, and not only that, but an offensive undertaken in a secondary theatre of war, where our strategy should have been to have remained on the defensive with minimum forces sufficient for that purpose. All my study indicated the disaster to me. However the die was cast. And so, when Sir John Nixon asked me on the eve of battle : ‘Are you confident of winning, Townshend ?’ I replied, ‘Yes, I shall win alright.’ And I did win.” The next battle was fought at Ctesiphon and the sacrifices which the British made here were so great that out of 8,500 men of the 6th Division who went into the battle, over half never returned and those who returned were completely wrecked. And now it was discovered that the British had already gone too far. Sufficient number of troops and supplies were not available to march ahead and Ctesiphon itself was not supposed to be a place secure enough to stay put. Retreat to Kut was supposed to be the only safe course, and the withdrawal was forthwith authorised.

As the news of what now began to be termed as ‘Mesopotamian Muddle’ reached England, the whole nation was stunned. The campaign had been organised in haste. No proper consideration had been given to the principles of strategy. The army sent to Mesopotamia was probably the Forgotten Army of the First World War so

1. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 107.

that even the ammunition which was supplied to it was only labelled as "Made in the USA. For Practice only." As the retreat from Ctesiphon commenced the Whitehall was not sure whether the Indian troops would be able to keep Kut either. Suggestions were made that if further withdrawal from Kut was necessary, defensive position should be established at Qurna so that the oil fields and the pipeline could at least be kept safe. Townshend, however, was not ready to suffer such humiliation. The hero of Chitral declared that he had withdrawn to Kut and was not prepared to withdraw any further. He said : "I mean to defend Kut as I did Chitral."

The British retreat from Ctesiphon however spelt ruin. The Turks were strengthening themselves. Continuous reinforcements arrived from Baghdad and the British stay at Kut itself became problematical. If the British had to stay on at Kut its defences required heavy fresh reinforcements. Townshend had with him 12,000 soldiers, of whom about 2,000 were sick and wounded. Besides there were 3,500 Indian non-combatants, all of whom had to be properly fed and medically looked after. The supplies available with him, however, were not sufficient. Unless relief arrived within a short time, Townshend and his men, if not killed by the Turks, would speedily be starved to death. Urgent messages were sent. Fresh supplies of troops and material began to pour into Basra, but a trip from that place to the front and back took as many as 20 days, and sufficient number of boats were not available to keep the supply line properly running. In the meanwhile the Turks gave Townshend yet another battle at Kut, where 315 of the garrison were killed, although the Turks themselves lost as many as 907. This battle took place on the Christmas eve of 1915, which made the Christmas Day celebrations dull. The Turks having failed to dislodge Townshend from Kut now adopted the alternative course to besiege it and made ready not to permit any relief from outside to reach the besieged garrison.

The situation indeed was extremely difficult. As fresh troops and supplies poured into Basra Lt. General Sir Fentol Aylmer was put in charge, and on 3 January 1915 the operation to reach Kut began, but the odds which the relieving force faced were heavy. They had to fight to gain every inch of land. Battles were fought at Sheikh Sa'ad, Wadi, Hanna, Dujaila and Bait Aisa. One general after another failed. Nixon was replaced by Lake, Aylmer failed to deliver the goods and gave place to Gorringe. But they all were humbled. To relieve the forces at Kut the British suffered heavy casualties. But still the job could not be accomplished, and it was given up in despair. Townshend at Kut had been receiving messages from Khalil, the Governor of Baghdad, who in a letter to the besieged officer invited him to surrender, giving him every assurance of the highest Turkish consideration. "Fighting hunger was as important as fighting Turks, and, by the end of January, his (Townshend's) stocks of

food were being supplemented by slaughtering the transport animals locked up in Kut with the garrison. To provide beef the heavy battery bullocks were the first to go; after them came the horses and mules, and by mid-April every single animal had been butchered. Towards the end of the siege it is said that even dogs and cats were getting scarce and undoubtedly there were those amongst the British troops who were prepared to eat such meat. The last of the mules to come to its undignified destiny was one which had served in the three Indian campaigns, the ribbons of which it wore around its neck; when its turn came the butcher refused to slaughter it and twice it was sent back. But in the end, like the rest, it had to go."<sup>1</sup> Townshend surrendered to the Turks. He was taken to Baghdad where Khalil gave a grant dinner party in his honour. Later on he was removed to a fashionable residence of the British Consul at Prinkipo where he remained as an honourable guest of the Turks till the war was over. The story with his men, however, was different. They were subjected to all sorts of ill-treatment and hundreds died from the lack of food and proper medical attention.

Such is the story of the Mesopotamian campaign which has gone down into history as 'The Mesopotamian Muddle'. The fall of Kut was a terrible shock to the proud people of England. It was a big catastrophe, the parallel to which lay only in the surrender in the American War of Independence by Cornwallis with his 7,000 men. The Press clamoured for a close inquiry into the whole episode. The demand could not be resisted and a Commission of inquiry was appointed to go into the whole matter. The report was prepared and the causes of the British failure were analysed.

### **Causes of Failure**

The causes of the British failure in Mesopotamia were natural as well as artificial. Of the natural causes leading to the British failure were the alien land, the unfavourable weather, the irrigation channels close to the river which made smooth progress difficult, the lack of landmarks, that of cover, absence of pure drinking water and the lack of geographical information. Added to this were the difficulties created by Buddhoos, the natives of the Arab lands, for whom both the Turkish and the British were the foreigners who were destroying their fields by digging trenches, who interfered with their irrigation canals and treated them in their own land as nothing more than dirt. It was natural in these circumstances that they should have taken every opportunity to profit by loot. They were even prepared to dig up the graves to lay their hands on boots and clothes buried with the dead. The British therefore had not only to guard themselves against the Turkish attacks but also against these Arabs who lost no opportunity to steal whatever they could and always

1. *ibid.*, p. 208.

hung round the British camps.

Of the artificial causes was the lack of foresight in the government officials in India as well as in England. Beauchamb Duff, the Commander-in-Chief of India was at least two years behind the time. Thus whereas the Turks in Mesopotamia were using the wire-cutters and other such equipments, he did not know that any such thing ever existed. The whole army system in India was fitted only to meet the troubles in the North-West Frontiers. The soldiers were not fully trained to fight against an army capable of giving pitched battles and disciplined in the modern standards of warfare by an advanced European country like Germany. The artillery guns which the Indian soldiers handled were still small handy weapons meant to be used against the fleeing tribesmen. They were incapable of giving the necessary covering fire to a marching infantry, nor were they fit to do the counter-battery job which in the circumstances had to be left to the warships in the Tigris. Whereas in England the soldiers were given new types of webbing equipment which permitted them to keep their rifle ammunition in pouches easily accessible and put their field-service equipment like a spare shirt and socks in a pack at their back, nothing of this type had yet reached the soldiers in the Indian army. The Indian army lacked the mechanical transport service. The medical services were still primitive. For munitions and officers they depended almost wholly on Britain which were bound to fail them when the British resources themselves were heavily taxed during an exigency like the First World War. There were other such defects and this despite the fact that the forceful hands of Kitchner had recently brought about a large number of changes and reforms but for which the account given by the Indian army should have been worse.

The greatest defect from which the Indian army however suffered was the combining of the administrative and the operational duties which was made in the time of Lord Curzon. The new system adopted by the weak and divided British Cabinet against their better judgement under the pressure of Kitchner's threats for resignation had subverted the civil supremacy in India. As a result of this system "the personal inspection of troops by the C-in-C diminished, and his magnetic influence grew small by degrees, and dangerously less." The warning that the combination of duties of Commander-in-Chief and Military Member of Council would prove dangerous was not heeded and the Royal Commission which conducted the inquiry clearly came out with a conclusion that this was one of the causes which led to the British failure in Mesopotamia.<sup>1</sup> Beauchamb Duff himself admitted that the dual role had been utterly difficult for him to perform. He had been so overwhelmed by administrative detail that he was almost completely cut off from

1. Magnus, Philip, *Kitchner*, London, 1964, pp. 211-226.



contact with the combatant services. "The layman in Bombay," he said, "knew more about what was going on in Mesopotamia than Army Headquarters in Simla."<sup>1</sup>

The Mesopotamian War was over. Kut had surrendered but that was not the end of the story. After this Whitehall took over from the Government of India. The British arms were carried successfully into Baghdad, but before that, Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, who was partially held responsible for the abortive march to Ctesiphon had to resign his post. Lord Hardinge the Governor-General of India was considered more blameworthy than Chamberlain and was indicted by the Commission, but his resignation was not accepted because it was considered detrimental to public interest. The story of Mesopotamia was over, but the questions continued to be asked: Why did the British go to that country at all? Was the campaign ever necessary? There was no doubt, that the whole scheme of Mesopotamia was misconceived, carried out in haste, without necessary preparations and the only result of this what now began to be called the 'Mesopotamian Muddle' was the ultimate liberation of Mesopotamia from Turkey. But even this credit was denied to the British by modern Iraq, which believed that the Ottoman Empire was broken up only by the Arab revolt.

### Change in Policy with Tibet

We may conclude with a short reference to Hardinge's policy in connection with Tibet. Some further changes took place in Tibet during his time.

During the time of Hardinge, a revolution broke out in China, and the Chinese garrison in Tibet not getting its regular pay and supplies mutinied and plundered the treasury of the Lhasa government, to be ultimately expelled by the Tibetans. Here was an opportunity for the Dalai Lama who re-entered his country after two years, and took over the administration from the Chinese Resident promising him all protection. The Chinese government instead of taking any action against the Dalai Lama, issued a decree confirming all powers on him. In 1912, at the face of constant rumours of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, the Indian government let it be known to the Chinese plainly that though they recognised Chinese suzerainty they would not tolerate Tibet to be reduced to the status of a mere province of that country. The joint conference between the Chinese, the Tibetan and the British representatives under the chairmanship of the Government of India's Foreign Secretary in 1913-1914, at Simla and Delhi, settled the question and peace in Tibet was restored. Dalai

1. Barker A.J., *op. cit.*, p. 29.



Lama retained his powers and offered to assist the British during the First Great War.

### The Home Rule Movement

The Nationalist Movement in India during the time of Lord Hardinge acquired new forms and dimensions. The Home Rule Movement, the Pan-Islamist Movement, the Ghadar Party and the Agrarian Rising that took place, each had a character of its own; the general background being the First World War and its effects. A short account of these may follow.

The Great War which broke out in 1914, was exercising a tremendous influence on the Indian politics. "India's participation in the war was no nominal affair, not a mere gesture."<sup>1</sup> She sent thousands of her sons and supplied millions of rupees to help England fight her enemies. The Indian political parties gave their full cooperation. And all this was not being done in vain. Lord Hardinge insisted that the Indian troops should be sent "not as auxiliaries, nor into zones of minor strategic importance, but as the complete equals of their European comrades into breaches on the Western front on the holding of which, then and there the outcome of the war itself depended."<sup>2</sup>

"The heroic deeds of gallantry performed by the Indian soldiers on the frosty and frozen battlefields of Flanders and under the blazing sun of the Mesopotamian deserts, received universal acclamation, and India found herself a member of the Peace Conference along with the Dominions...The contact with the Westerners and the comradeship in arms through the perils of war developed a sense of equality among the Indian soldiers and broadened their outlook... The Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination, which became a formidable factor in the writing of Peace Treaties, and which in its practical shape resulted in the birth of a number of states in Europe, found in the heart of every Indian the ready response of an ardent votary."<sup>3</sup>

The Home Rule Movement in a way, was the product of war itself, which by widening the mental horizon of the Indians, and by raising in them new hopes, aspirations and courage, made the organisation of this movement possible. "India," declared Annie Besant, "does not chaffer with the blood of her sons and the proud tears of her daughters in exchange for so much liberty, so much right. India claims the right, as a Nation, to justice among the peoples of the Empire. India asked for this before the War. India asks for it

1. Paul, K.T., *op. cit.*, p. 116.

2. Zacharias, *Renasant India*, p. 163.

3. Bartarya, S.C., *Indian Nationalist Movement*, pp. 154-155.

during the War. India will ask for it after the War, but not as a reward but as a right does she ask for it. On that there must be no mistake."<sup>1</sup>

Tilak started the Home Rule Movement at Poona, in April 1916, and Annie Besant founded it in Madras in the following September. Both the leaders worked in cooperation with each other, and made a great contribution in the political awakening of India. In Madras, the Movement became very popular, large numbers of students joined it, and the Theosophical Lodges, wherever they existed, began to open its branches. The Movement in a short time, became so formidable that the Madras Government had to put Annie Besant, together with her two co-workers—Wadia and Arundale, behind the bars. Tilak on the other hand was ordered to furnish two sureties of Rs 10,000 each and execute a personal bond of Rs 20,000. This order, however, was cancelled on an appeal to the Bombay High Court. And the Madras Government also released Annie Besant after some time.

Regarding the objects of the Movement, we may do no better than quote Annie Besant herself who wrote in the first issue of her weekly paper, *Commonweal* "In political Reform, we aim at the building up of complete Self-Government from Village Councils through District and Municipal Board and Provincial Legislative Assemblies, to a National Parliament, equal in its powers to the legislative bodies of the Self-Governing colonies, by whatever names they may be called; also at the direct representation to Imperial Parliament, when that body shall contain representatives of the Self-Governing States of the Empire." Or in other words, the great British Commonwealth of Nations was her aim, in which India would occupy the position of an equal partner.

The Home Rule Movement, however, could not last for long. In August 1917, Mr Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, made his historic declaration promising self-government by stages. Soon, Mr Montagu himself came to India, to consult and plan an immediate step. Much of the purpose of the Movement thus seemed to be served, and it began to decline fast. Mrs Besant was elected by the Congress of 1917 as its President, and the movement died down.

### THE PAN-ISLAMIST MOVEMENT

The Pan-Islamist movement, which was purely Islamic in character, but which had a Hindu sympathy, was organised in northern India in the second decade of the twentieth century. The basis of the movement was religion, but in effect it was political and anti-

1. *How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 580.

British. The source of inspiration was the basic sympathy of the Indian Muslims towards Turkey.

Turkey had been the 'Sick Man of Europe' for a pretty long time. Different European communities under its control, had been asserting themselves and trying to get independence. The big powers of Europe always tried to exploit the situation and draw as much benefit as possible. The net result of all this was a steady decline of the once mighty Turkish empire. Turkey being a Mohammedan country, it had a natural sympathy for the Indian Muslims.

During the Turko-Italian and Balkan wars of 1911-13, Great Britain had manifested an attitude of complete neutrality, whereas the Indian Mohammedans should have liked the British to show an active sympathy towards Turkey. The speech of Mr Asquith, the British Prime Minister, which he delivered in the connection in November 1912, was rather interpreted to mean active British hostility not only towards Turkey, but towards Islam itself.

During the World War, Turkey had joined the enemies of Great Britain. The Pan-Islamist section among the Indian Muslims carried on its contacts with Turkey, Arabia, Germany and Afghanistan. But after the Central Powers had been defeated, and a harsh treatment was shown towards Turkey, this coupled with the propaganda of the Sultan Abdul Hamid and later of Enver Pasha, imbued some Muslims of India yet further with the Pan-Islamic aspirations. For a time they also joined hands with the Hindu revolutionaries in a Hindu Mohammedan Entente against the British, which resulted into the Punjab and Bombay outbreaks of April 1919, and in the more serious Moplah rebellion of 1921-22. The Entente, however, collapsed after spreading disorder and bloodshed over the country for some years.

The rural Mohammedans of India being interested chiefly in their local politics and in their protection against exploitation by the more astute urban Hindus, the movement seems to have been confined basically to the urban Mohammedans. Among the most effective members of the movement was Zafar Ali Khan, the editor of *The Zamindar* published from Lahore. In 1912 he started subscriptions for the Turkish Crescent, and after having a good amount of money collected, he himself went to Constantinople to present it to the Grand Wazir. On his return, the tone of his paper having become more anti-British, his security was forfeited in 1913, under the Press Act. Shortly after not only the security was again confiscated but his Press also met the same fate. Mohammad Ali and his brother Shaukat Ali, were the other two active leaders.

Early in 1914, Turkish Consul-General came to present a beautiful carpet to the Badshahi Mosque at Lahore, which had been sent

by the Sultan of Turkey as a mark of gratitude towards the help the Indian Muslims were rendering. And shortly after followed two Turkish doctors of the Red Crescent Society itself.

During the Christmas week, soon after Turkey had entered the War in 1914, a Mohammedan educational conference was held at Rawalpindi. It was attended by Abul Kalam Azad and Mohammed Ali, who after the conference was over, lectured to young and impressionable Muslim students at tea-parties in some Lahore Colleges and elsewhere. In February 1915, 15 students from Lahore and some students from Peshawar disappeared as a result of this and got into touch with the Indian revolutionary leaders, Mahendra Pratap and Barkatulla, the Joint Presidents of Provisional Indian Government who with the German help, had made Kabul their advance base.

Some of these students from here, were sent on missions to Persia, Central Asia and Japan, three of whom, together with the famous Sikh missionary Dr Mathra Singh, fell into the hands of the Russian allies of the British on the Persian border. They were handed over to the British authorities who hanged them later. Two of the students thus hanged, were carrying letters to the Sultan of Turkey and the third together with Mathra Singh was on a mission to China and Japan. From some of these students the British got in August 1916, the information regarding the "Silk-letter" plot which had originated in Kabul in 1915-16.

The so-called "Silk-letter" plot was designed to unite all the forces of Islam, the Turks, the Afghans, the Arabs, the Frontier tribes and the Muslims of India, against the British. The plan was that the Frontier tribes of the revolutionary Hindus and the America-returned Sikhs in India would at once join in the conspiracy which was organised with some skill in Central Asia, Hejaz, Mesopotamia and India, and when the start was made, much help was expected from other quarters.

Just this time, two of the students, who were sons of a Mohammedan soldier in the Punjab, sent a servant who had joined them in Kabul, with some message to their father. When severally heckled, the servant admitted that he had brought a letter written in Persian on lengths of yellow silk and sewn up inside the lining of his coat. The letter dated 9 July 1916, was meant for Mahmud Hasan, a famous Muslim religious leader in Sind, and in it was described the progress of the movement in Kabul, the formation of the 'Provisional Government etc., and a plan for the organisation of an "Army of God" against the British.

Earlier in 1916, the Provisional Government had also despatched a mission to the Russian Governor-General in Turkistan and even to the Tzar of Russia urging upon him to break with England. The

Tzar forwarded this information to the British authorities, but later, the Bolsheviks tried to make use of this proposal in a bid to stab the British in the back.

This explains how serious and widely laid plans the movement had. Mahmud Hasan, to whom the Silk-letter had been addressed, had already got into communication with Ghalib Pasha the Turkish General in Hejaz from whom he obtained a declaration of Jihad against the British, the copies of which, known as Ghalibnama, were freely distributed in India. The Silk-letter gave him the suggestion to carry his preparations a step further. The headquarters of the Army of God were to be at Madina and Mahmud Hasan was to be its Commander-in-Chief.

In the Punjab, however, these efforts did not go beyond internment of a dozen or so pro-Turkish adherents. Zafar Ali Khan's movements were restricted to his village till the end of the war. The Ali brothers were restricted to a place near Delhi. After his release, Zafar Ali Khan re-started his activities, and in 1920, he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. The Ali-brothers and Mr Gandhi under the similar circumstances, were also sentenced to long-term imprisonments. The movement, except at Kabul, where the Muslim leaders established contacts with the revolutionary Hindus inspired from Berlin, and at some places in India, was entirely distinct from the Hindu and Sikh movements in the Punjab. The imprisonment of the leaders led to the development of hostilities between Hindus and the Muslims once again.

The final blow to the movement was given as a result of the summary action of the new Turkish Republic in deposing the Sultan. This abolished the Khilafat and sent the Osman House to wander.

### THE GHADAR PARTY

The Ghadar Party, unlike other movements, was organised outside India by Indian emigrants, and in it the Sikhs played an influential and a dominant role. Its origin and the part it played in the Punjab and elsewhere may be briefly traced.

Before the British annexed the Punjab, the northern and the north-western parts of this province had been very sparsely populated. Soon with the development of canals and other means of irrigation and cultivation, this part of the country was colonised and enterprising Sikhs from the eastern Punjab migrated to this part and became the wealthiest agricultural community of India. But it was not long before the increase in family and some factors led to the fragmentation of holdings. The development of the evil of money-lenders impoverished them further. The monsoons failed successively from 1905 to 1910 thus resulting into a famine. The imperialistic

and economic exploitations of the British as Dr Tarak Nath Dass writes in his *India in World Politics*, added to their poverty and forced this enterprising community to seek other means of employment elsewhere outside their country.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning they migrated to Bengal but later also to Burma, Malay States, Hong Kong, Singapore, China and other places where they worked as watchmen, policemen, electricians, taxi drivers, etc. In 1888 some Sikh troops attended Queen Victoria's Jubilee in London and on their way back visited Canada where they were impressed by its riches. Soon steamship companies were set up, which attracted the Punjabis, more particularly the Sikhs, who began to travel thither. In 1904 when the Sikhs in Hong Kong, Shanghai, etc. learnt of the high remunerations and profits available in Canada and the United States of America, a large number of them also decided to go over to those countries. By 1914 about 20 lakh Indians were working and residing outside India; Africa alone claiming 1,49,790 of them. All over the American continent, the number of the Indian emigrants by 1910 ran into five figures.

The infiltration of the cheap Indian labour affected American labour agitation for higher wages in 1906 and 1907 with the result that the American workers began to despise them. In 1906 the Canadian Legislature passed the Immigration Act to control the influx of Asiatics into that country. In 1907 the British Columbia Legislature dispossessed the Indians of their right to vote, and in 1908 their Municipal franchise was also taken away. Later, the already settled Indians also began to be got rid of through several new means. The Sikhs built a Gurdwara in 1906-7, at Vancouver in the British Columbia at the cost of £15,000. Many Sikhs set up their factories in the country. With the efforts of St. Teja Singh, the Guru Nanak Mining Company was set up with a capital of 2½ lakh rupees. At the Eagle Harbour, 250 acres of land was purchased at £25,000 for Guru Nanak Colony and another Gurdwara was built at Victoria. All this developed a jealousy in the European minds. The authorities tried to prevail upon these Indians to migrate to British Honduras where, as they propagated, better prospects would be available, but which was only a land covered with forests and with a scarce supply of good drinking water. The Indians could not be trapped and the authorities were yet further antagonised.

The policy of racial discrimination in South Africa hardly needs much explanation. Here many restrictions were placed on Indians and many discriminatory taxes imposed on them. In 1893 Mahatma Gandhi had to start an agitation against this attitude of the South African Government which continued for twenty-one years. In 1912 G.K. Gokhale visited Africa to see the fight of the Indians.

1. Dass. Tarak Nath, *India in World Politics*, p. 213.

In Fiji the condition was no better. The Indians there were treated inhumanly, and not being permitted to send for families, they were losing their character. G.W. Burton in his *Fiji Today*, gives a heart-rending story. Thus he writes, "an Indian woman leaving her sick child in a coolie-line, went away to work in the field. In the mid-day recess when she came back in the line to see her ailing child, she was spied by a European sergeant who began to beat her blindly with a cane. The Indian woman with her ailing child was falling on the sergeant's feet, but he paid no heed and went on beating her."<sup>1</sup>

In Australia and New Zealand the conditions were no better, and the South Indians were equally despised in Malaya.

Several efforts were made on the American continent to get the grievances of the Indians redressed. But they all failed. On 14 March 1913 a deputation consisting of Bhai Balwant Singh from Vancouver and Sardar Nand Singh and Sardar Narayan Singh of Phillaur arrived in England. But there too they failed in winning the attention of the authorities. The deputation then came to India. Meetings were held at several places. In a meeting at Amritsar Bhai Balwant Singh expressed the grievances very clearly. The deputation also met the Viceroy and the Governor of the Punjab at Simla. But nothing came out of all this and the deputation had to go back discontented.

Before, however, the deputation reached back in America, the Indian emigrants there had already realised that the root-cause of all their troubles was the slavery of India itself, and till she got her independence, no Indian could expect an honourable treatment in any country of the world. In March 1913, therefore, Kartar Singh Saraba, Karam Singh Chima, Lala Har Dyal, Jawala Singh, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Wasakha Singh, etc. invited the settlers to a conference at Washington. About two hundred attended and founded the Hindi Association, which later began to be called the Ghadar Party.

Headquarters of the party were to be at San Francisco and its aim was to liberate India by force. The first president of the party was Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, the chief secretary Lala Har Dyal, the treasurer Pandit Kanshi Ram of Ambala and the organising secretaries were Munshi Karim Bakhsh of Ludhiana and Munshi Ram of District Hoshiarpur. Among the members of its executive committee were, Baba Arur Singh of Chuhr Chak in Ferozepur, Wasakha Singh Dadehr of Amritsar, Bhai Karam Singh Chima of Jullundur, Kartar Singh Saraba of Ludhiana, Nidhan Singh Chuga of Ferozepur, Ishar Singh Margna of Amritsar, Pandit Jagat Ram

1. Burton, G.W., *Fiji Today*, p. 189.



Haryana, District Hoshiarpur, Barkatulla, and Munshi Karim Bakhsh. Majority of the settlers being Sikhs, in the party too they had a majority. Leaders and the members of the executive committee, all of them handed over their property and cash to the party.

In October 1913 the second meeting of the Hindi Association decided to bring out a paper of their own, and on 1 November 1913 was thus the *Ghadr* started, which was published simultaneously in Hindi, Gurmukhi, Urdu and Marathi. Har Dayal was appointed as its editor, who was soon arrested, but bailed out by his friends, he was helped by them to escape at the cost of bail bonds. Har Dayal thus disappeared from the scene in the United States.

Besides Har Dayal, other important persons who worked in the press for the *Ghadr* were Kartar Singh Sarabha, Harnam Singh Kotla, Nodh Singh and Prithvi Singh of Ambala. Manager of the press was Pandit Jagat Ram Haryana. The party bore only their expenses of food and clothing, no other remuneration was paid. The paper began soon to reach Argentina, Fiji, India, Australia, New Zealand, Zanzibar, East Indies, Siam, Malaya, Burma, China and Japan. Branches of the party were likewise established in different countries of the world.

The British anxieties increased when just after the War began, thousands of the Sikh emigrants inspired by the *Ghadr* propaganda and determined to make their country independent, poured into the Punjab, and if spread over the Province, they were bound to make the British life extremely difficult. Government of India already had Foreigner's Ordinance to prevent entry and control the movements in India of undesirable aliens. On this basis, the Ingress Ordinance of 5 September 1914 was passed to deal with the Indian emigrants coming back to India. A serious problem arose for British authorities when on 27 September 1914, a ship, *S.S. Komagata Maru* brought 400 Sikhs and 60 Muslims from the Far East to Hooghly.

In the meanwhile the activities of the Ghadarites in the United States went apace. Bopp, Brincken and Papen of the German Embassy catered to their needs, and a large number of the propaganda leaflets issued by the party urging the Indian troops to desert the English and join the Germans were thrown behind the trenches in Mesopotamia and France. Two ships *Annie Larson* and *Maverick* full of guns, ammunition and other war materials for the use of *Ghadr* members were also fitted out in America and it was decided to smuggle the goods through some isolated port in India. The party also bought an aeroplane and trained its members as pilots.

1. Gurdit Singh, Baba. *Voyage of Komagata Maru* (Calcutta). Also see Jaswant Singh, *Baba Gurdit Singh, Komagata Maru*, Jullundur, 1967 (In Punjabi).

Besides the *Komagata Maru* which brought in persons inspired on the Ghadarite lines : loads of revolutionists came from America, Canada, Panama, Hong-Kong, Singapore, Siam and Burma. Shiploads of them arrived at Calcutta, Madras and Colombo. On 28 October the Japanese *S.S. Taru Maru* arrived at Calcutta with 173, mostly Sikhs from America, Japan, Manila and Shanghai; consisting of many Ghadar leaders, allotted separate circles for their activities in the Punjab. The Punjab Government again despatched a strong force of Punjabi policemen under the British and Indian officers. All the passengers were interned in Central jails of Montgomery and Multan, and only 73 were released later after enquiries. Of these 73, supposed to be less dangerous, six were hanged for subsequent Ghadar outrages, 6 were transported for life, 6 were re-arrested and interned and two became informers. And this shows what violent programme those not released might have brought in the country.

In the meanwhile, from October 1914, thousands of more Sikhs arrived from abroad who after an enquiry, were divided into three categories : (1) Those who were considered to be really dangerous characters were interned in jails. (2) Those who were of less dangerous character, whose movements were restricted to their own villages and (3) Those who were discharged after a warning. Out of the 8,000 who entered the Province during the first two years of the war, some 400 were thus interned in jails, 2500 were restricted to their villages and the remaining were discharged.

Scores of the Ghadarites however slipped through enquiries under the Ingress Ordinance and contacted the local revolutionary leaders. The persons such as Kartar Singh Saraba, N.G. Pingle, Pandit Jagat Ram, Kanshi Ram, Prithvi Singh, Jagat Singh and many others successfully infiltrated into the Military cantonments and persuaded the army units to revolt at the appropriate time. Their propaganda in the army was successful at Rawalpindi, Lahore, Ferozepore, Lucknow, Faizabad, Cawnpur, Allahabad and Jubbolpur. From October 1914 to September 1915 a series of explosions took place in the Central Punjab and attempts were made to seize the arsenal at Ferozepur. About this time it was that Rash Behari moved into the Punjab and took general charge of the operations. He together with N.G. Pingle became the brain of the movement and Bhai Parma Nand, a Professor in the Arya Samaj College became a link between the disaffected section of the Hindu Intelligentsia and the Sikhs of the Ghadar Party.

Everything was working according to schedule. Rash Bihari and Pingle had their headquarters at Amritsar, and they were active in inciting the Indian troops, especially the Sikhs and Rajputs posted in northern India. They planned for a general uprising on 21 February 1915. But unfortunately their plans leaked out. They changed their headquarters to Lahore and decided for the uprising to

take place on 19 February instead. The Government, however, struck in time, 4 separate houses were raided in Lahore, 18 persons were captured with all their papers, plans and bombs, etc. but Rash Bihari and Pingle escaped. At other places and cantonments, timely measures were taken. The *Annie Larson* and the *Haverick* failed to make contacts and were captured. A week later, Pingle was also arrested in lines of the 12th cavalry at Meerut, with a collection of bombs sufficient to blow up a regiment.

Legal proceedings were undertaken against the revolutionists, which culminated in the following famous cases; Lahore Conspiracy case; the Simla Conspiracy Case; Benaras Conspiracy Case; the trial of Sergeant Harnam Singh at Faizabad; the Delhi Conspiracy Case; the trial of those arrested at Budge Budge; Ferozepur Conspiracy Case; Meerut, Barisal and Burma trials and the trials at Shanghai and Singapore.

Pingle and Parma Nand were sentenced to death. Pingle was hanged but Parma Nand's sentence was commuted to life transportation by the Viceroy and was later released. In brief, 175 accused in Ghadar conspiracy were brought before Special Tribunals. Of these 136 were convicted of offences nearly all punishable with death; 38 were sentenced to death, but in 18 cases the sentences were commuted to life transportation, and 20 were actually hanged. 58 were transported for life and 58 were transported or imprisoned for shorter periods. In 115 cases forfeiture of property was ordered, but in most of them it was remitted by the Local Government. Those who were interned, were later on released on security and by the end of the war only some half a dozen were still under detention.

The Government took several other measures to crush the movement. The old policy of "divide and rule" was used. "With the assassination of Ram Chandra by a Sikh Ghadar agent for treachery and fund manipulation, the Hindus were encouraged and cajoled to leave the party. Similarly Dr Syed Hussain and Shaukat Ali toured the State and started a Muslim League to wean away the Moham-medans. Some prominent Sikh members were also deceived in heading a dissident movement...

"Charges were also levelled that the party was operating as a smuggling ring through Mexico and was at the back of frequent Hindu murders." The US Immigration Service and the British Consulate selected Indian informers on such activities, though many of them, as Nagina Ram, Sant Ram Pande, Nana Lal, Nathu Ram and Sheru Ram in the United States, and Hopkinson, an ex-official of the Indian C.I.D., were got killed by the party.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Spokseman Weekly* of 9 Feb. 1955; Gurcharan Singh Sahnsara, *Gadar Party da Itihas* (Jullundur, 1961, Punjabi).

In the badly affected districts of the Punjab, committees of the local Sikh magnates were established, who helped the deputy commissioners in enquiring into the conduct of the emigrants and helped in controlling them. This naturally led to the assassination of many of the loyal magnates. In June 1915, for instance, Achar Singh of Amritsar was murdered. In August, Kapur Singh of Amritsar met the same fate. In\* most of such cases the murderers were captured and punished.<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge retired from India in 1916, and after he returned, he was made a Knight of Garter. Shortly after, he was reappointed Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. He was appointed British Ambassador in Paris in 1920, and in 1922 he retired from the Diplomatic Service. He, however, continued attending the meetings of the House of Lords regularly, and died in August 1944 at the ripe age of eighty-six.

"Full of character, energy and determination, he left behind him the record of an active and brilliant man who had devoted himself to his duties and to the interests of his country."<sup>2</sup>

1. For further details see Deol, Dr Gurdev Singh, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in National Movement*, Delhi, 1969.
2. Mersey, Viscount, *The Viceroy's of India*, p. 126.

## Viscount Chelmsford, 1916-1921

Eldest son of Frederic Augustus, 2nd Lord, who had served as a distinguished soldier in the Crimean War, the Mutiny of India and in South Africa, Frederic John Napier Thesiger was born on 12 August 1868. His mother, Fanny, was the daughter of Major-General Heath of the Bombay Army. He was educated at Winchester and Magdalen College, Oxford, where for his classical scholarship he was made Fellow of All Souls. In 1894 he was called to the Bar, and in the same year married Frances Charlotte Guest, the daughter of the 1st Lord Wimborne. His father died in 1905 and he became a peer. He served as Governor of Queensland, and then of New South Wales, and became G.C.M.G. in 1913. He was forty-eight when he was appointed by Asquith in 1916, as the Governor-General of India.

When Chelmsford arrived in India, he found the people clamouring for further constitutional reform.

### INTERNAL REFORMS

The Minto-Morley Reforms had failed to satisfy the aspirations of the Indians. K. M. Munshi commenting on them writes: "Political changes known as Minto-Morley Reforms were brought in as a sop to the moderates." Legislative Councils established under it, were merely consultative, special care was taken to see that "class was set against class, community against community, each to cancel out the effect of the other." Zamindars and commercial classes were given disproportionate representation at the expense of the politically minded classes, substituting those who cannot criticise for those who can, even going to the extent of creating special interest before such interests were organised or articulated.<sup>1</sup> And further,

1. Keith, *Speeches...* II, 213-17.

it seems<sup>1</sup> difficult to escape the temptation of quoting Dr Zacharias who has beautifully summed up the defects, as : "The essence of the Morleyan Reforms lay in conceding what at once was evacuated of all meaning. Thus the elective principle of democracy was adopted : yet at the same time anti-democratic communal representation was added. The official majority was done away with; but the elected members remained in a minority. The membership was considerably enlarged; but an emphatic disclaimer was issued simultaneously that the new Council in no way meant the introduction of a parliamentary system. The Council of India and even the Viceroy's Executive Council were opened to some very few selected Indians; but the liberal aspect of admitting an Indian, to the arena of government could in no way disguise the fact that real power remained safely in British hands."<sup>1</sup> Such an enactment was bound ultimately to invite the bitter criticism of the Indians. And this is what happened.

The Muslims had secured the best consideration in the Act of 1909. But the British failed to keep even their sympathy for long. The annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911 and the Muslim differences with the Government on the conditions of creating a Muslim University at Aligarh, all this antagonised the Muslim community. Certain events occurring abroad, also affected the Anglo-Muslim relations. The hostile English attitude towards Turkey in the Turko-Italian war of 1911-12 and in the Balkan wars of 1912, and the active Congress sympathy towards Turkey; all this brought about a change in the attitudes of the Muslims of India. The English occupation of Egypt and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 whereby Persia was divided by these countries into their two spheres of influence, added to the discontentment of the Indian Muslims. And when the First Great War broke out and Turkey made its entry in November 1914 against the English, it added a violent difference between the English and the Muslims in India

Nor did the Germans lag behind in trying to take an advantage of the situation. Turkey had been fighting on the side of the Germans, and since the Indian Muslims' sympathies were attached to Turkey against the British, Germans made every effort through them to destroy the British power in India. A combined mission of Germans and the Turks visited Kabul in 1915, and after discussions with the Indian Muslim leaders—Mohammad Ali and Obeidulla, drafted a plan for a provisional government in India.

Some nationalist leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad also took advantage of the situation, to bring about a Hindu-Muslim concord, and prepared the Muslims for a fight against the British. A Muslim educational conference held at Rawalpindi in 1914 was

1. Zacharias, *Renascent India*, p. 216.

addressed by Maulana Azad and Mohammad Ali, whereafter these two gentlemen lectured to young and impressionable Muslim students at tea-parties in some Lahore colleges and elsewhere. As a result of all this in February 1915, 15 students from Lahore and some from Peshawar disappeared from India and got into touch with Mahendra Partap and Barkatulla, the joint presidents of the 'Provisional Indian Government'. These students played a great part in carrying their missions to Turkey, China and elsewhere. The Russians were contacted urging them to break with England. Plans were prepared to organise an 'Army of God' to remove the British from India.

The Muslim League also amended its constitution in its 1913 session at Lucknow, which permitted a closer relationship between Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslim League also placed like Congress, its goal at the attainment of self-government under the aegis of the British Crown, by constitutional means. And at a largely attended public meeting at Lucknow, Mazar-ul-Haque, a Muslim leader, declared : "The anti-Congress Mussulman is fast becoming an extinct species and will have soon to be searched for in some archeological museum."

The Indian National Congress also stepped up its activities. In its Karachi Session of 1913 the Congress demanded a reform in the Secretary of State's Council, and required that the Secretary of State for India's salary should be paid out of the British revenues. In its 1916 Session the Congress declared : "India must cease to be a dependency and be raised to the status of a self-governing state as an equal partner with equal rights and responsibilities as an independent unit of the Empire." And further that : "India must be governed from Delhi and Simla, and not from Whitehall or Downing Street."<sup>1</sup> The Congress also tried to woo the Muslim League.

All these developments and the arrest of the nationalist leaders like Maulana Azad, Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali and Hasrat Mohani for their pro-Turkish speeches paved the way; and in December 1915, both the League and the Congress held their annual sessions at Bombay. The Congress leaders like M. K. Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu attended the League deliberations. Committees were appointed both by the Congress and the League to draft a common plan for reforms. The plan was prepared, and it was discussed by the League and the Congress at their joint session at Lucknow in 1916. These discussions resulted into the famous Lucknow Pact which established a definite unity of action between the two organisations.

The Lucknow Pact was an important document which struck a compromise between the Hindus and the Muslims.. Both the League

1. See Sitaramayya, B.P., *History of the Indian National Congress*, I, pp. 23-24.



and the Congress left their original stands and agreed to concede each other's viewpoint as far as possible. In this Pact the Congress accepted the principle of separate Muslim electorates and a weight-age to the Muslims in the minority provinces. Several other concessions were made to the League, and the latter agreed with the Congress on a joint scheme which said: India should be "lifted from the position of a Dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions." The Pact said that henceforward neither of the two parties would support a resolution, bill or a clause affecting a community, if three-fourths of the members of that community opposed it.

The more important points of the joint reform scheme agreed upon were that (1) the Central and the Provincial Legislative Councils be further enlarged by raising the number of the elected members whose proportion to the nominated members should be 4 to 1; that (2) the Central as well as the Provincial Executive Councils should include Indian members, at least half of whom should be elected by the members of the Imperial or the Provincial Legislative Councils, as the case may be; and (3) that the resolutions passed by the Legislative Councils should be binding on the Government, unless the Governor-General vetoes them, and that if a vetoed resolution is passed again after the passage of one year, it should become law.

Such thus was the unity forged between the two parties, and between the two communities. The Lucknow Pact, according to the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, was "the latest, most complete and authoritative representation of the claims of the leading Indian political organisations."<sup>1</sup> Those indeed were the days of India's glory when the spirit of nationalism began to dominate once again the petty communal considerations. Such an atmosphere thus could not fail to affect the diehard British attitude towards India.

Nor were the League and the Congress alone in demanding political reforms. During 1915-16 Mrs Annie Besant and Lokmanya Tilak founded the Home Rule Movement. C.Y. Chintamani writes, "Under the auspices of this Movement, Annie Besant established organisations throughout the country, distributed vast quantities of propagandist literature, and was to be found here, there and everywhere with speeches which always kindled and never restrained."<sup>2</sup> "Her plan," as Zacharias comments, "was to disentangle the nationalist Extremists from their compromising alliance with the Revolutionaries, to reconcile them to a position within British Empire and to bring them with the Moderates into line in a united Congress."<sup>3</sup> She said "I am an Indian Tomtom, waking up all the sleepers so that

1. *Report on the Indian Constitutional Reforms* (9, 8), 159.

2. Chintamani, C.Y., *Indian Politics Since Mutiny*, pp. 225-26.

3. Zacharias, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

they may wake and work for their motherland." The aim of the Home Rule Movement, according to Besant, was "the building up of complete self-Government from village council through District and Municipal Boards and Provincial Legislative Assemblies, to a National Parliament, equal in its powers to the legislative bodies of the self-Governing colonies, by whatever name these may be called; also direct representation of India in the Imperial Parliament, when that body shall contain representatives of the self-Governing states of the Empire."<sup>1</sup> Tilak, an Extremist, joined her, and one result of the movement was that the Extremists and the Moderates in the Congress came closer together. The Movement aiming at a Home Rule for the Indians developed a great popularity among the Indian students, large numbers of whom began to join it, and the Government had to take certain special steps to check the developing tendencies. Annie Besant was interned in 1917, which only inflamed her followers, and after three months when she was released, the Indians showed her their gratitude by electing her the President of the Indian National Congress.

In the initial stages the Government passed certain very repressive measures to suppress the rising Indian ambitions. The Indian Press Act of 1910, the Seditious Meetings Act of 1911 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1913, were all aimed towards this direction. The Defence of India Act of 1915 was indeed a ruthless measure under which the revolutionary offenders began to be tried by a strong bench of judges. No right of appeal was given against the decision of these judges. The Government's ghastly treatment of the lovers of India's independence, however, only strengthened their spirits. The more the Government punished them, the greater they grew in stature and the greater was the awakening among the people.

Nor was the part played by the Indians abroad less important. These Indians were being subjected to very discriminative and humiliating treatment by the Governments of the countries they inhabited. They realised that the root cause of all this was their slavery at home; and so long as this lasted they could expect no honourable treatment by any country outside India. In March 1913 some Indians in the United States of America held a conference at Washington, and founded their Hindi Association when began later to be known as the Ghadar Party, as we have already seen.<sup>2</sup> Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, Lala Har Dayal and Pandit Kanshi Ram of Ambala were among the more important leaders of this movement. In November 1913 the Party started its paper, *Ghadar*, which was published in Hindi, Gurmukhi, Urdu and Marathi. The paper soon began to reach

1. Besant, Annie., *India Bond or Free ?* p. 164.

2. See Chapters on Lord Hardinge of Penshurst.

Argentina, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Zanzibar, East India, Siam, Malaya, Burma, China and Japan, and the branches of the party were likewise established in these countries.

The part the members of the Ghadar Party played in India is too well known to be repeated. The story of *Komagata Maru*; the revolutionary activities of Rash Bihari, N.G. Pingle and Bhai Parmanand, and their plans for a general uprising on 21 February 1915 which unfortunately leaked out before its execution entailing a severe governmental reprisal—all these were among the contributions of this party.

India of those days was the India of great fighters for freedom. Great leaders trod this land awakening the Indian masses and calling upon the Government to concede India's political demands. Gopal Krishna Gokhale declared : "A sufficient number of our countrymen must now come forward to devote themselves to the cause in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken." Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's "Ganpati Festivals, Shivaji Celebrations, Paisa Fund and National schools were all instituted for one purpose, the overthrow of British rule," as the Bombay Governor wrote to the Secretary of State for India. Lala Lajpat Rai, the Lion of the Punjab, played no less important part. Chintamani wrote about his speeches : "In the thrilling effect they produced upon the mass mind, some of his Urdu speeches could only be compared to Lloyd George's orations at Lime House and Mile End."<sup>1</sup> Har Dayal's revolutionary activities, Annie Besant's Home Rule Movement, Motilal Nehru's sacrifices and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's 'Bande Mataram' song were all inspired by this desire for freedom. These activities had an effect on the political atmosphere. There were several other leaders of the time among whom M.K. Gandhi grew into great prominence later on.

Then the war too had its effect on India's destinies. India was fighting the war of Great Britain, but at her own cost. She expended £ 146 million which were voted out of her revenues. About a million of the Indian soldiers went to countries like France, Belgium, Persia, East Africa, Palestine and Egypt. The cheerfulness, bravery and loyalty with which they fought and sacrificed their lives, invited the sympathies of the most reactionary and the conservative of men. Besides the money voted from the regular revenues were the compulsory loans, the war funds, the subscriptions and funds from the Indian princes all of which ran into millions. All these great sacrifices were made by India for Great Britain, despite her hatred against the English imperialism in this country. And when all this was done, India sincerely hoped that Great Britain would feel the gratitude and give the well deserved political rights to the Indians, bringing them to a status of equality with the self-governing colonies.

1. Chintamani, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

The war affected the Indian atmosphere in yet another manner. When the recruitment campaign spread, Indians in every part of the country felt the atmosphere of war and awoke to hazard an assessment of its effects on India. This developed their interest in public affairs and hence gave an impetus to the nationalist movement.

Besides, as K.T. Paul writes : "One of the effects of the war was to break up in a large measure the sheltered isolation in which Britain had guarded her for a century and a half." When the Indians fought shoulder to shoulder with the British soldiers, and were welcomed in France as the great heroes and saviours of democracy, they lost the effect of the British hypnotism, and back in India they were hardly prepared to put up with the superior atmosphere of the white biped. "If a summary should be hazarded," writes K.T. Paul, "it may be said that the war led India to a truer understanding of Western culture in its tragic limitations and its hopeful possibilities, brought India finally into the sisterhood of nations and placed before her the challenge to qualify in full measure to the expectations that the world had of her."<sup>1</sup>

But, writes Coatman, even if the war had not come, everything that had happened in India since the middle of the nineteenth century had made it increasingly certain that India must sooner or later, tread the same political path as the British Dominions had trodden. The war did no more than speed up the pace of advance."<sup>2</sup> This too, however, was no mean contribution of the war.

The writer may be excused in quoting S.R. Sharma too in this respect. "The affirmation of moral values in the war and the doctrine of self-determination, deeply influenced Indian public opinion. If the war was being fought to make the world safe for democracy, it was hoped that it would at last put India on the road to self-government. If self-determination was to be applied to the politically dormant Arabs in the Turkish Empire, it was asserted it should be applied to the Indians as well."<sup>3</sup>

Demands were made for political reforms, but the reply was that India must wait till the war ended. But this could hardly satisfy the Indians. The irresponsible utterances of the men like V. Chirol "The justification of our presence in India is that it gives peace and security to all the various races and creeds which make up one-fifth of the population of the globe. To introduce self-government into India would necessarily be to hand it over to the ascendancy of the strongest"<sup>4</sup>—incited the Indian antagonism. And the proposed

1. See Paul, K.T., *The British Connection with India*, (1927) p. 140.

2. Coatman, John, *India, the Road to Self-Government*, pp. 39-68.

3. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

4. Chirol, *op. cit.*,

federation of the British Empire after the War developed India's apprehensions that in that case she would be brought under the subjection of all the British colonies who already despised the Indians on the basis of their colour. India thus became more serious in her demands for immediate reforms. The Irish problem had been tackled and the Reforms Act was passed during the war in 1918. Therefore the excuse of delaying reforms in India was not understandable. It is in these circumstances that Lord Chelmsford came to India.

### THE MONTAGU DECLARATION

The question of the constitutional reforms had to be taken up by Chelmsford with the Home authorities almost immediately. And as this became known, definite proposals came pouring from several quarters as to what these reforms could be. The detailed study of all these schemes which were a potent proof of wide political awakening, would perhaps occupy hundreds of pages of this volume, and therefore only a brief reference to them may here suffice.

Among those who forwarded different plans for reforms, were the nineteen members of the Imperial Legislature including Mr Jinnah, Srinivasa Shastri and Surendra Nath Banerjea who in a Memorandum submitted in 1916, declared: "What is wanted is not merely good government or efficient administration, but government that is acceptable to the people because it is responsible to them." The Memorandum demanded among other things that the total membership of the Imperial Legislative Council should be increased to 150. The provincial councils should also be enlarged and India should be granted a fiscal autonomy. The above Memorandum was published in October 1916, while in December of the same year a joint scheme prepared by the Congress and the League was put forward, which required that the crown should issue a proclamation "that it is the aim and intention of British policy to confer self-government on India at an early date". A few of the special features of this plan have already been mentioned above. "Gokhale's Political Testament" was prepared in 1915, which demanded complete provincial autonomy, and in the Imperial Legislature "increased opportunities of influencing the policy of government by discussion, questions connected with the Army and Navy being placed on a level with other questions." Lord Chelmsford, the Governor-General of India, also secured in May 1916 the draft plan prepared by the Round Table Group which had been started by Lionel Curtis in 1906, and now had its branches in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and England.

Such was the atmosphere under which Austin Chamberlain the Secretary of State for India prepared a draft of reforms for India. But Chamberlain was a reactionary, and St. Wedderburn wrote to Bupendra Nath Basu "I am afraid we need not expect much from the present regime."

In the midst of all these activities and developments, perhaps luckily for India, there occurred the Mesopotamian disaster which shocked the whole British nation. A campaign being conducted entirely by the Indian Government against Turkey, failed at Mesopotamia. The whole British attention was focused on the Indian Government, and this brought about the fall of Mr Chamberlain. A Parliamentary Commission was appointed to examine the causes. The Government structure in India was closely examined, and this also offered an opportunity to assess the public opinion in this country. The Commission condemned the centralised and irresponsible Government of India which according to its opinion required to be thoroughly overhauled. Josiah Wedgewood, one of its members, recommended that a more responsible part should be given to the Indians in the administration of their own country. Montagu who later became Secretary of State for India also declared: "The Government of India is too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too anti-deluvian to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view."<sup>1</sup>

The situation in India was getting worse every day, and writes K.T. Paul, "It was the genius of Montagu that saved the situation before it was too late."<sup>2</sup> Montagu succeeded as the new Secretary of State for India on 12 July 1917, and the draft prepared by his predecessor was taken up once again. The draft contained in it the word 'self-government' but unfortunately when it passed through the diehard hands of India's ex-Governor-General, Lord Curzon, the word 'self-government' was removed and in its place was substituted the word 'responsible government'. Lord Curzon had fired his gun in order to rob India of her political advance as much as he could. But his ignorance was surprising. He did not understand that any responsible government necessarily implied a Parliamentary government, and hence a self-government. Curzon's biographer Ronaldshay comments: "What then was Lord Curzon's point of view? His introduction of the word 'responsible' into the formula in association with the word 'self-government' cannot have had one meaning; it can only have meant that it was a Parliamentary system which the government aimed at setting up. Did he realise this? It is almost incredible that he did not do so."<sup>3</sup>

Anyway, after the draft was ready on 20 August 1917 Montagu made his historic declaration in the House of Commons:

*"The policy of his Majesty's Government with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the*

1. See Smith, W.R., *Speeches of Montagu*; Waley S.D., *Edwin Montague*.

2. Paul. *op. cit.*, pp. 121-3.

3. Ronaldshay, *Life of Curzon* (in three volumes), III, p. 168.



*progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible...I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of Indian peoples must be judged of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the cooperation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility."*

*The Importance.* The importance of this declaration cannot be overestimated. The promises made in the declaration in definite words were (1) that the Indians would be increasingly associated with the administration ; (2) that self-governing institutions would be gradually developed ; (3) that responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire was the ultimate goal ; (4) that substantial steps towards this direction would immediately be taken ; (5) that an ultimate goal would be achieved by stages ; (6) that the British Government and the Government of India would be the sole authority to judge the time and measure of each advancement ; and (7) that in this they would be guided by the responsible Indian leaders, and their capability to handle responsibility.

"The Declaration," comments S.R. Sharma, "closed one chapter in the constitutional history of India and opened another. Benevolent despotism was now dead and gone...India's right to Swaraj was admitted, and despotism was to give place to constitutional government...so all its ifs and buts were ignored and the announcement was welcomed by almost all political parties."<sup>1</sup>

The Declaration showed how the world was moving, and how great was the effect of the political movements in India. It was only in 1908 that Morley the Secretary of State had declared : "a Parliamentary system is not at all the goal to which I would for one moment aspire." Morley's successor Lord Crew definitely set his face against any colonial Self-Government to India. But Montagu promised the 'responsible-government' to India as the ultimate British goal in this country.

Such a development was no less the result of the Hindu-Muslim concord at home, and therefore it was a great source of inspiration to all the Indian communities to come together and put up a joint fight for ultimate independence.

Nor were the Extremists less heartened. To them it was a victory

1. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 362.



for the Extremists, and a signal to sharpen their swords, to prepare to fight, and ultimately to win what Tilak declared to be his 'birth right.'

The greatest significance of the declaration perhaps lay in the fact that every Indian was now convinced that a self-Government for India was within the domain of possibility. The later nationalist leaders of India often quoting this Declaration criticised the Government that it was not proving true to the promises. The Declaration gave them the moral courage, and they fought for their political rights.

The Declaration was indeed a turning point in the history of India. With the announcement of 20 August 1917 modern India entered on a new era in her history. It eased the tense Indian atmosphere for a time, and prepared the country for a more serious and a promising political battle. Everybody looked around in India, joy and satisfaction beamed from the faces, and the people felt that India after all had climbed a high peak, though higher peaks still lay beyond to be conquered and to rise to the glorious sun-shine of India's Independence.

There were certain diehards and reactionaries who disliked so much being given to India. And Sir Reginald Craddock was one of them. He said : "Apart from the rash inclusion by Lord Curzon of the words 'responsible government', the form of announcement was also in other ways very defective. It promised substantial steps in the desired direction in advance of the inquiry which Mr Montagu with the aid of Lord Chelmsford was about to hold in order to see whether any substantial steps at all were possible in the immediate future. It failed even to notice that the princes and chiefs, whom it did not mention at all, cannot be a part to any scheme. It omitted to state that wide diffusion of education and the complete dying down of all racial and religious animosities must be the absolute conditions preceding to any serious political advance. Mr Montagu announced the verdict first, and commenced to hold the inquest afterwards. He began to build a tower before and counted the cost."

Yet there were certain sympathisers of India whom the Declaration failed to satisfy in the positive side. Montagu had done much, yet it was not sufficient. No definite time was prescribed by which India would reach her goal. Nor was there any standard laid down by which one could decide whether a certain stage for further reforms had been reached or not. It was indeed insulting to India that the British alone were the judge to decide whether India was capable of a particular set-up of Government or not. India's requirement was an immediate self-government, and under these circumstances as Annie Besant wrote, that which was offered, was "unworthy of England to offer and of India to accept."<sup>1</sup>

1. Setalvad, *Recollections and Reflections*, pp. 29-33.

Still the Declaration was significant, and even in this Montagu did not find many supporters among his countrymen, either in England or in India.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT 1919

Montagu came to India on 10 November 1917, discussed the matter with the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford and consulted some top-ranking leaders of the Congress and the League, and certain important officers of the Government of India. A committee was appointed consisting of Sir William Duke, Earl of Donoughman, Bhupendra Nath Basu and Charles Robert, which together with the Viceroy, helped the Secretary of State to draft a scheme which was published and was known as the Montford Scheme. It was on the basis of this scheme that later on the Government of India Bill was drafted, which became an Act in 1919.

Before discussing the provisions of the Act it would be informative to note that the progress of Montagu's enquiries in this country was not very smooth. Montagu was fired with the ambition of doing something for India, while those around him with whom he had to work, were not. Even Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy was only an unwilling hand, and would answer his questions in a very discouraging manner, as: "I am afraid it is not," or "I wish it were possible, but I am afraid..." It was only after some seventeen days of work with him that Montagu was able on 27 November to note in his diary that "Chelmsford seems to be strengthening in favour of my scheme."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Preamble

The Act laid down in its preamble the principles on which the reforms were to be progressively carried on in this country. These principles were more or less a repetition of those laid down in the Declaration of 20 August 1917. The analysis of the preamble brings out the following points. (1) The British India would remain "an integral part of the Empire". (2) The aim of the British Government was to establish a responsible Government in this country. (3) Progress "in giving effect to this policy can only be achieved by successive stages." (4) The "time and manner of each advance can be determined" only by Parliament, in which (5) the Parliament would be guided by two factors: (a) "by the cooperation received from those on whom new opportunities of service will be conferred," and (b) "by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility". And (6) for the development of self-government, two things are necessary: (a) "the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration," and (b) "gradual development of self-governing institutions."

1. Waley, S.D., *Edwin Montagu*, pp. 147-51.

The significance of the preamble was that what was already declared by Montagu, was now given a definite legal shape. The sovereignty of the British Parliament over India was reasserted, and the country was told in clear terms of the line of the future British action.

The preamble also declared that "it is expedient that substantial steps in this direction should now be taken." Be it therefore enacted .....as follows."

### **Home Government**

The Indian National Congress had passed a resolution in its session of 1916, that "India must be governed from Delhi and Simla, and not from Whitehall or Downing Street." Or in other words, it was desirable that the autocratic powers of the Secretary of State and his Council to interfere in matters purely Indian, should be done away with. The necessity of such a reform was felt by many others, and the Act also provided for this to some extent.

The powers of the Secretary of State for India were thus reduced, and the number of the cases in which a reference to him was necessary were cut down. Whereas up to now every legislation, whether introduced in the Central or a Provincial Council, required a necessary approval of the Secretary of State, now only the legislation of the Central Council concerning Currency, Public Debts, Customs, Military affairs and the Foreign affairs was to be referred to him. In the Provincial affairs his interference in the transferred subjects was completely stopped, his control on Provincial finances was reduced, and the Bills to be introduced in the Provincial Councils were now to require a very rare reference to him. Most of his powers in this connection were delegated to the Governor-General. And further, to enable the Parliament to exercise an effective control over him, it was provided that his salary and allowances would now be charged on the British exchequer, and not the Indian revenues.

A new office, the office of the High Commissioner for India was created for the first time, and some of the functions of the Secretary of State were transferred to him. The High Commissioner was to be an agent of the Governor-General-in-Council, was to be appointed by the Government of India and paid from the Indian revenues. The functions assigned to the High Commissioner were supposed mainly to be ceremonial, though commercial and certain other functions previously performed by the Secretary of State were now to be performed by him. Thus, he was to handle the function of purchases in England, of machinery and stores for India. He was to look after the interests of the Indian students in England. And his term of office was to be six years.

The office of the High Commissioner had a significance in the fact that it was expected to afford certain sentimental satisfaction to the Indians. This, however, it could not do. The High Commissioner thus to be appointed was not a representative purely of the Indian people. If he was an agent of the Governor-General, the latter himself being an agent of the Crown it is obvious what interests actually the High Commissioner was to represent. Nor were the powers of the Secretary of State reduced to the extent it could have been desired by India.

The Act also introduced certain changes in the constitution of the Secretary of State's council. Its membership was now reduced to a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12. Half of its members were required to have served in India at least for ten years. The salary of the members which had been reduced in 1907, was now raised from £1,000 a year again to £1,200 each. Their powers were also increased, as the distinction between an urgent, secret and other matters was removed in connection with the Secretary of State's correspondence with the Governor-General. Or in other words, all matters were now to be placed before the Council. And the term of office of the members was reduced from 7 years to 5.

The changes introduced in the Council was significant in the fact that instead of a personal control of the Secretary of State, the committee sense was permitted to have a greater play in matters most urgent and important.

### Central Executive

Certain significant changes were introduced in the composition and functions of the Central Executive and the Legislative Councils. Coming first to the Executive Council the total membership of which was 6, here the number of the Indian members was increased from 1 to 3. These members were to hold office for five years, and were entrusted with the departments like that of Law, Education, Labour, Health and Industries.

The Act provided for two lists of subjects : the Central and the Provincial. Those subjects which were of national importance, or which related to more than one province such as Foreign, Defence, Political Relations, Posts and Telegraph, Public Debt, Communication, Civil and Criminal Law and Procedure etc. were included in the Central List; while others which were only of provincial importance, such as Public Health, Local Self-Government, Education, Medical Administration, Land Revenue Administration, Water Supply, Famine Relief, Law and Order, Agriculture etc. were included in the Provincial List.

The changes in the Central Executive Council, however, left much

to be desired. Although a step was taken towards increasing the association of the Indians with executive functions, as the number of the Indians in the Council was raised to three, yet the departments allotted to them were unimportant. Nor were these members made responsible to the Legislature. They owed their power to the British, hence they at the best were only the 'yes-men' of the Viceroy. No vote of no-confidence could remove them, and they being responsible only to themselves, worked only for selfish gains.

Nor was the division of the subjects into two lists based on proper considerations. There was overlapping and while the important subjects like land revenue were assigned to the provinces, the less important ones such as commerce, which should have belonged more essentially to the provinces, were kept with the Centre. And yet more, the subjects given over to the provinces for administrative purpose were not done so necessarily for legislative purposes also. Thus, for instance, any legislation concerning water supply and the self-governing bodies which were provincial subjects, had to be passed in the Central and not in a Provincial Legislature.

The chief executive authority remained with the Governor-General who was Head of the State, a representative of the King of England and was constantly in correspondence with the Secretary of State for India. He had a full control over his Councillors, and enjoyed vast powers over the country, though his powers on the provincial administration were reduced. In his appointment, the wishes and the aspirations of the Indians got the least consideration.

Yet, even the little progress that was made in this connection was significant. The association of three Indians with the executive functions was no mean achievement, and once this was done it was now not difficult to develop their representative character also.

### Central Legislature

The more important changes, however, related to the Central Legislative Council which was made more powerful and more representative. In place of the Imperial Council consisting only of one House, now a bicameral legislature was set up which was to consist of the Council of States and the Central Legislative Assembly.

The Council of States which was to be the Upper House, was to consist of 60 members, 27 of whom were to be nominated and 33 elected introducing thereby the majority of the elected element. The 27 nominated members were to consist of 17 officials and 10 non-officials, while of the 33 elected members 16 were to represent non-Muslims, 11 were to be elected by the Muslims, 3 by Europeans, 2 by non-communal elements and 1 by the Sikhs.

The life of the Council was to be five years, its President was to be nominated by the Viceroy, and its members were to enjoy the title of Honourable—The women were not entitled to become its members. The Governor-General could address meetings, and he could summon, prorogue or dissolve the House.

With regard to franchise it was extremely limited. Thus for instance only those paying an income-tax on the minimum income of Rs 10,000 a year, or those who paid land revenue of minimum Rs 750 a year, were entitled to vote. Besides, the other qualifications were that a person must be a Senator of some university, or he must have some past experience in some Legislative Council of India, or he must be a holder of titles, etc. The limit of the franchise is revealed from the fact that out of the entire population of India, not more than 17,364 persons got the right of vote for the Council of State.

The Legislative Assembly was to constitute the Lower House, and its total membership was to be 145, of whom 104 were to be elected while the remaining 41 were to be nominated. Of the 104 elected members, 52 were to be returned by the general constituencies, 30 by the Muslim constituencies, 2 by Sikhs, 9 by Europeans, 7 by landlords and 4 by the Indian commerce. While of the 41 nominated members, 26 were to be official and 15 non-official.

The life of the Assembly was to be 3 years. Its first President was to be nominated by the Governor-General, who would hold office for 4 years, after which the Assembly itself would elect its President. The Assembly could be addressed by the Governor-General who could summon its meetings, prorogue it or dissolve the House.

The franchise in the case of the Legislative Assembly was also very much restricted. It varied from province to province. But the minimum qualifications were such as the voter must be an occupant or an owner of a house of the minimum rental value of Rs 180, or he must pay the municipal tax of Rs 15 a year, or should be paying an income tax on an income of not less than Rs 2,000 a year, or he should pay a land revenue of at least Rs 50 a year. Thus only moneyed and property owning classes were given the franchise, while the rest were not. And the total number of voters in 1920 to the Assembly was not more than 909,874.

The distribution of seats was made among the different provinces on the basis of their so-called importance, and not on the basis of their population. Special weightage was given to smaller provinces and to the minority communities.

### **Powers of the Central Legislature**

The Central Legislature as constituted of the abovementioned two Houses, was supposed to have been given very wide powers. It could legislate for the whole of the British India, for the Indian subjects and servants of the Government, whether inside or outside the country. It could repeal or amend any law already existing in the country.

The members of the Legislature were given the right to initiate a legislation according to rules. They could move a resolution, and a motion for adjournment. They had the right to ask questions and supplementary questions and they could also put interpellations. The right and freedom of speech was given.

There were, however, certain restrictions imposed on the Legislature. In certain cases a previous sanction of the Governor-General was required for the introduction of a Bill, as for instance in connection with the (1) amendment or a repeal of an existing law or an ordinance of the Governor-General; (2) Foreign relations and the relations with the Indian States; (3) discipline or maintenance of the military, naval and the air forces; (4) public debt and public revenue; and (5) religion, religious rites and usages of the people. And further, if the Governor-General felt that any Bill or a part of it "affects the safety or tranquillity of British India, or any part thereof, he could prevent its consideration."

The Legislature of India could amend or repeal no statute of the English Parliament concerning India, nor could it do anything which might affect the Parliament's authority or the unwritten Constitution of England.

If on the advice of the Governor-General the Indian Legislature refused to pass a law, the Governor-General could pass it himself, subject to the sanction of the Crown. He could promulgate an ordinance which could last for six months, and was to have the same force as the law passed by the Legislature. His final assent was necessary for any Bill to become an Act, which he could refuse even if both the Houses had passed, or he could send a Bill back for reconsideration.

With regard to the Budget, it was laid down that the Government would submit proposals for appropriation in the shape of demands for grant in the Legislative Assembly. There were certain items which could neither be discussed nor voted upon in either House, unless the Governor-General permitted it. But on those items which could be discussed and voted upon too, the powers of the Legislature were limited; as even if a grant was rejected, it could be restored by the Governor-General if he felt it necessary for the "safety or



tranquillity" of the country.

Thus as it is obvious there was much in the Central Legislature which was undesired, and it lacked much which was desired. The voting qualifications were too high, and through them the big capitalists, *zamindars* and other vested interests alone could be elected. Nor was the distribution of seats among the different provinces much that was desired. The only touchstone was the importance of a province, and this importance was measured in terms of loyalty to the British Crown, or in terms of the British commercial interests, etc. Thus for instance Bengal was granted 16 seats, but Bombay with a population which was only half of that of Bengal, was also granted 16 seats because of its commercial importance. The Punjab with a population only  $\frac{2}{3}$  of that of Bihar and Orissa was granted 12 seats, the same number as granted to Bihar and Orissa. And for this military importance was the cause given. The system of communal electorates which had been condemned, was rather further extended to the Sikhs in the Punjab, the non-Brahmins in Madras and the Marathas in Bombay.

In its functions the Legislature was supposed to have been given vast powers, but in reality these powers were restricted to such an extent that their existence was only a sham. A Bill on certain subjects could not be introduced at all, while on others it could be disallowed in the midst of its consideration, or refused an assent to even if it had been passed by the two Houses. The Governor-General's legislative powers were autocratic indeed. He could pass a law which the Legislature had refused to pass. He could issue an ordinance which would have an equal force with a law. In the case of the Budget too, while certain powers were given with one hand, they were taken away with the other. On certain items absolutely no discussion was allowed, and the cut imposed by the Legislature could be restored by the Governor-General. Thus while 60 per cent of the Budget was made free from the Legislature's control by the Act, the remaining 40 per cent could be freed by the Governor-General himself.

Then the constitution of the Upper House was such as instead of helping the Lower House, it "checkmated the Assembly and formed an impregnable citadel for the Government."

Still the Act of 1919 was a significant improvement upon that of 1909. The establishment of the bicameral legislature laid down the lines on which the future political progress in India was to be made. The franchise was improved, and the powers of the Legislature were not such as could prove entirely ineffective. Some of the members were placed on the Standing Committees such as that of Public Accounts and Finance, and here they got considerable opportunity to influence the Governmental policy. The elected majority if not heeded

to, could debate and discuss the Government's policies, could move and pass resolutions against them and could ask questions and interpellate, thereby making itself no bed of roses for the Government. It is difficult to imagine that even the most irresponsible and heartless of the members of the Government could escape the effects of such criticism by the members.

### **The Provincial Governments**

The most significant of the provisions of the Act, however, were only those which related to the provincial administration. The Act declared in its preamble : "concurrently with the development of self-governing institutions in the provinces of India, it is expedient to give to those provinces in provincial matters the highest measure of independence of the Government of India, which is compatible with the due discharge by the latter of its own responsibilities." And the changes the Act introduced in the provinces therefore were far-reaching.

### **THE EXECUTIVE CHANGES OR DYARCHY**

Taking first the executive side of the provincial governments here a new system was introduced which we term as Dyarchy. The subjects of administration were already divided into two lists : the Central and the Provincial as discussed earlier. But the provincial list was now further divided into two: the reserved and the transferred subjects.

The Reserved Subjects were those which were supposed to be of greater importance, which involved law and order in a province and which were considered more intimately connected with the welfare of the people. These subjects were kept under the control of the Governor who would distribute them among the nominated members of his Executive Council. The subjects were: Police; Administration of Justice; Irrigation and Canals; Water Storage and Water Power; Drainage and Embankments; Land Improvement and Agricultural Loans; Land Revenue Administration; Famine Relief; control of newspapers, printing presses and books; borrowing money on the credit of the province; Prisons and Reformatories; Forests—except in Burma and Bombay; settlement of labour disputes; and factory; inspection.

The transferred subjects were those which were supposed to require more local knowledge, involved a closer Indian interest and a spirit of social service. These subjects were to be transferred to the Indian ministers who were to be appointed by the Governor from among the elected members of the Legislature. They were: Education of the Indians; Public Works which included Roads, Bridges and Municipal Tramways, but excluded Irrigation, Agriculture

and Fisheries; Local Self-Government which included the control of the Municipal Corporations and District Boards; Excise, Forests of Burma and Bombay; Public Health, Sanitation and Medical Administration—which included the control of the medical education, hospitals and asylums; technical education, the development of industries and industrial research.

The Governor-in-Council who administered the Reserved Subjects, were responsible to Parliament and consisted almost entirely of the Europeans. While the Governor acting with the ministers who were to administer the Transferred Subjects, they were almost entirely Indian and were responsible to the provincial legislatures.

In the case of the Transferred Subjects, the Act provided that where there was no Minister to administer a department, the Governor himself could assume its charge temporarily. He was to encourage joint deliberations among the Ministers, and when so required, could override their decisions. And finally, if he was satisfied that the situation required the step, he, with the prior approval of his council, and that of the Secretary of State-in-Council, could revoke, transfer or suspend all or any Transferred Subject, which in that case would now become as good as the Reserved Subject and would be administered as such.

Such thus were the changes introduced in the provincial executive. The system thus established was known as Dyarchy, because of its having two features—the Reserved and the Transferred Departments.

The Act also introduced certain changes in the provincial legislatures. Their size was increased, though no bicameral legislature was introduced. They were to be known as Legislative Councils and their total membership varied from province to province. Thus, the smallest council was that of Assam the total membership of which was 53, while the largest was that of Bengal the total membership of which was 140. In between were those of Madras with a total membership of 132, United Provinces with 124, Bombay with 114 and Punjab with 94.

Of the total number of the members of a provincial council, at least 70 per cent were to be elected, while not more than 20 per cent were to be the officials, the remaining to be nominated non-officials. Thus for instance in the Madras Council, of its total number of 132 members, 98 were elected, while 11 were officials and the remaining 23 were the nominated non-officials. Again in the case of the Punjab, of its 94 members of the council, 71 were elected, 15 were officials and 8 were nominated non-officials.

The system of elections introduced for the councils was direct.

the primary voters electing the members. But high property qualifications, the communal and class electorates and special weightage to certain communities were kept.

The functions of these councils were also correspondingly increased. The members of these councils had free rights to speech, questions and interpellation. They could move resolutions and could initiate a legislation concerning any provincial subject; though every Bill passed required an ultimate approval of the Governor, which if refused, the Bill could not become an Act. In the case of budgets too, as for the Central Legislature there were certain items such as the salaries of the public servants and the contributions to the centre which these councils could not discuss. While the changes introduced in the rest of the items which were subject to their approval and vote, could be restored by the Governor, reducing their powers thus to a sham.

### **Working of the Dyarchy**

A note may here be appended as to how the system of Dyarchy worked. In the system as it was established, the *Governor* was the pivot of the whole administration. He was the final authority both in the Reserved and the Transferred Subjects. He was the final authority in the allocation of the provincial revenues to the various departments. He gave weekly interviews to the Permanent Secretary of every Department, and discussed with them the matters concerning their Departments. He recommended names for appointment on his Executive Council and on the High Court. He appointed Indian ministers from among the elected members of the legislature and distributed the portfolios among them. He could dismiss these ministers and take up the administration of the Transferred Subjects in his own hands. Or he could keep a minister in his office even at the face of a bitter opposition of the members of the legislature. The transfers and posting of the officials under different departments was done by him, and he was the chief supervisor of the whole administration in the province.

A Governor enjoyed very wide powers on the provincial legislature as well. The preparation of the electoral rolls, fixing the polling stations and calling for the nominations, all this was done under his directions. The elections were conducted under his control, election petitions were entertained by him and he appointed commissioners for enquiry into the disputed cases. It was he who summoned the meetings of the legislature thus constituted. He could dissolve it even before the expiry of its term which was three years, could prorogue it or could extend its life for one year beyond its actual term of existence. No Bill could become law without his final assent which he often refused. He could restore cuts imposed by the members on the budget, and was the final authority in appointing members on

the standing committees.

As regards the Executive Council, its membership varied from 2 to 4, and it was the strongest power in the province next to the Governor. It was the Governor-in-Council which administered the reserved subjects, was responsible to Parliament and consisted almost entirely of the Europeans, as we have already referred to. The work of calling nominations, selection of polling stations and the preparation of the electoral rolls was all done by this Council under the directions of the Governor. The members of the Council were each made in charge of certain reserved departments, in which they could decide the minor matters themselves. But in case of a difference with the permanent secretary of the department the matter was brought before the whole Council, where also were discussed all important matters, the Public Services and the legislative projects. The decisions in the meeting of the Council were taken by majority vote where the Governor had a casting vote, but where the Governor also enjoyed the powers to override a decision, though this power he exercised not very often. The members of the Council faced bitterest of criticism in the legislature where they were harassed, their demands of grant were cut down or rejected, and they were subjected to questions and interpellation. But these members had very cordial relations with the Governor whose special powers always came to their rescue, and they were able to brave the storms. Not unoften, however, they changed their direction and followed the storm itself, in which case sometimes great reforms were introduced and the people felt happy.

Working of the Transferred half, however, was different. Here the Governor acting with the ministers administered the Transferred Subjects. These ministers were almost entirely Indian, were appointed by the Governor from among the elected members of the Legislative Council, and were responsible to this Council in their activities. They, however, were completely in the control of the Governor who could dismiss them or keep them even in the teeth of opposition. If the Governor was satisfied that the situation required it, he, with the prior sanction of his Council and that of the Secretary of State-in-Council as we have already seen, could transfer, revoke or suspend any or all the Transferred Subjects, which in that case would now be administered as Reserved Subjects, and considered as such.

These ministers, in charge of the Transferred Subjects, had their life no easier than that of the Councillors. They were rather worse off. They had no organised party support at their back in the Legislative Council where the members criticised them and hacked them. The Governor gave his support to them only in a reserved manner, and in the field of financial supplies their departments received only step-motherly treatment from the Finance department.

Nor was the administration of the Departments smooth. Their secretaries and other officers had a direct approach to the Governor, in cases of their difference with their permanent secretaries the matter had to be reported to the Governor who sided with the secretaries more often than not. Nor was the division of subjects into the Reserved and the Transferred halves based on scientific considerations, so that often for efficient administration of their own departments they had to depend on the cordial cooperation of a member in charge of a reserved department, and this is what they rarely received.

### **Provincial Legislatures**

The Provincial Legislatures, as the Act established them, had majority of their members elected from single member constituencies where vote was direct, but the voting qualifications high. The qualifications of the candidates were also prescribed and efforts were made to bring in those whose loyalty towards the Government could be counted upon.

It was from among these elected members that the Ministers for the Transferred Subjects were appointed who were theoretically responsible to them, but in practice were controlled only by the Governor whose bidding they had to do or go. They could be kept even in the teeth of opposition, and a no-confidence motion against a Minister could not effect his career so long as the Governor wanted to keep him. In the early 'twenties thus, the Rent Control Bill of a Punjab minister was rejected, but still he did not resign.

Still, the members of the legislature enjoying freedom of speech, of questioning and interpellation, and of moving resolutions, made the lives of the ministers and of the Councillors only precarious. They moved adjournment motions and discussed their acts of omission and commission. They censored those in charge of the different administrative departments. They discussed expenditures on the Reserved and the Transferred heads separately and could impose cuts on the grants and ask for economy. But there were certain items such as the salaries of the Governor, the Executive Councillors, the Judges of the High Court and the other civil servants, which were not submitted for their discussion. And the cuts imposed on the other items too could be restored by the Governor.

It was from among these elected members that the members of the standing committees and the select committees were appointed. Here they secured a considerable opportunity to influence the Government policies. And their membership of the Public Accounts Committee which considered the report of the Accountant General on appropriation of revenue and expenditure, gave them an opportunity to influence effectively the financial affairs as well, thereby

inviting the introduction of the very good practice of careful accounts keeping.

In their legislative practices they made laws on the subjects within their jurisdiction. Their Bills required three readings before being sent to the Governor to secure his assent to become Law. And so far as the Bills on the Transferred Subjects were concerned, rarely was the Governor's assent refused.<sup>1</sup>

### Merits and Demerits of Dyarchy

Dyarchy was inaugurated in eight provinces on 1 April 1921. These provinces were Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Central Provinces, United Provinces, Bombay, Madras and Punjab. In the North-West Frontier Province it was extended later on in 1932. The degree of success that attended Dyarchy varied from province to province. It almost broke down in Bombay between 1924 and 1925 and in the Central provinces between 1924 and 1926.

In the provinces where dyarchy was established the official and secret papers were thrown open to the Indians. The Indian ministers issued orders to the English civil servants under them. In the transferred departments greater opportunities were created for the recruitment of the Indians to the higher government services, and the Indian leaders got better opportunities to introduce social reforms in the country. And much was done for the development of education in the country.

Nor were the services rendered on the legislative side inconsiderable. "A great overhaul of the Indian legal system was set on foot by the new legislatures, and the great Civil and Criminal Codes were reviewed and modified where necessary, whilst commercial, mercantile and other legislation governing specific interests was brought abreast of modern conditions." Much was also done by the provincial legislatures towards the democratisation of the Local Self-Government where franchise was lowered and the number of the elected members was increased. In the villages attempts were made to give the *Panchayats* more and more powers.

And in the end, although, as Coatman writes, "the achievements in economic and social improvement made by the Provincial Legislature under the 1919 Act were no more than the merest foreshadowing of what such bodies might accomplish with greater power under another system—such a system, in fact, as was to come into existence under the Act of 1935."<sup>2</sup> The greatest merit

1. See Appadorai A., *Dyarchy in Practice*.

2. Coatman, John, *India, the Road to Self-Government*, see pp. 39-68.



of the Act was that it prepared the Indians for greater responsibilities.

Roberts perhaps correctly says, that "Dyarchy was the best transitional mechanism that appeared after a prolonged examination of alternatives."<sup>1</sup> Yet, though for about three years the system worked well, it had its defects.

The division in the provinces of the subjects under the two heads of Reserved and Transferred was neither logical, sensible nor understandable; the result being that neither a Minister could work efficiently without the help of a Councillor, nor could the Councillor work without the help of a Minister. Thus, while Agriculture was transferred, Irrigation was sought to be separated from it and kept as Reserved. Education was similarly transferred, while strangely enough the education of the Anglo-Indians was kept as Reserved. The Industries were, again, transferred; while water power, factories, mines, etc. were kept as Reserved. It is strange that it occurred neither to the Secretary of State, his assistants, nor to any member of the Parliament through which the Bill passed that Irrigation related to Agriculture, and Agriculture depended on Irrigation, and that the two could not be placed under different controls. Nor was it understood that Industries depended on water, power, and that the separation of the Industries from the factories was bound to create problems. Sir K.A. Reddi, a minister of Madras thus remarked: "I was a Minister for development without the Forests, I was the Minister of Agriculture minus Irrigation. As Minister of Agriculture, I had nothing to do with the administration of the Madras Agriculturist's Loans Act or the Madras Land Improvement Loans Act...Famine Relief of course could not be touched by the Minister for Agriculture."

Nor was it possible to proceed without a unity of purpose between the two branches of administration—the Transferred and the Reserved. Thus, for instance, when there was the Sikh Gurdwaras Agitation, the purpose of the member in charge of Law and Order which was a Reserved subject was to introduce certain legislative measure to meet the problem, but this he could not do because the legislation in this connection could be introduced only by the Minister for Religious Endowments which was a Transferred Subject.

Nor could the Minister of Education aim at making the Primary Education compulsory without the help of the member in charge of Law and Order, and that in charge of Finance.

1. Roberts, *British India*, pp. 589-90. For further details see Phillips, C.H., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947*, pp. 201-16; Munshi, K.M., *Pilgrimage to Freedom*, pp. 1-14; Sharma, J.S., *India's Struggle for Freedom*, pp. 170-262, and 324-424.

Sometimes there was such a confusion that the authorities could not decide whether a particular subject belonged to one department or another. C.Y. Chintamani, a minister in the UP Government, thus relates an experience according to which in 1921 the Department of Agriculture started an enquiry in the fragmentation of lands, but when the report was ready in 1922, all of a sudden it was discovered that the subject should have been handled by the Revenue Department to which now the matter was transferred. But here too when two years' labour was put in further, it was discovered in 1924 that the subject after all belonged to the Co-operative Department.

The real powers in fact remained in the Reserved departments, the Transferred Subjects being only of less consequence so far as the national and political life of the country was concerned. In the most important matters the Indian ministers were not even consulted, as for instance in the arrest of Mr Gandhi. The repressive policy against the Non-cooperation Movement was planned and executed, but the Indian ministers were neither consulted nor did they know what actually the Government was planning to do. They, in the words of C.R. Das, were only "Dumb Spectators,"<sup>1</sup> of what went on around them.

Nor did a minister have the required control on the services under his own department. His own secretary had a weekly interview with the Governor, and often his opinion carried greater weight than that of the Minister. Whenever there was a difference of opinion between the Minister and his permanent secretary or between him and the commissioner of a division or the head of a department, the matter had to be placed before the Governor who would always support the man against the minister. P.N. Masaldan comments: "The carrying out of the policy laid down by the ministers was largely left to the services over which the ministers had no control. It was for the ministers, a case of holding responsibility without corresponding authority."<sup>2</sup>

Then there was a constant friction between the ministers and the Executive Councillors, and they sometimes openly condemned each other in public. But in such cases rarely did a Minister expect any support from the Governor who always sided with his Councillor, whether reasonable or unreasonable. The principle of joint responsibility not having been enforced, a Governor dealt with the ministers individually and not collectively, which made it yet more easy for him to override a minister.

Everything depended upon finance, but the Councillor in charge

1. Das, C.R., *India for Indians*, 1918, p. 369.

2. See Masaldan, *Evolution of Provincial Autonomy in India*, pp. 13-48.

of the Finance Department was perhaps determined to see that no administrative plan of a minister should succeed. While a Reserved department got all that was required, the plans of a Transferred department were rejected as worthless, money sanctions in their case were delayed, and the amount granted always fell far short of the actual requirement. Thus according to C.Y. Chintamani : "The Finance Member was certainly more anxious to see that his Reserved Departments got all money they required, before other Departments got what they wanted." And again : "I am prepared to state this without any exaggeration that it was from general experience of both the ministers in the United Provinces that they had to contend with great difficulties when they went to the Finance Department, that pretty frequently they had to go before the Governor, pretty frequently the Governor did not side with them and pretty frequently they could only gain their point in the end by placing their offices at the disposal of the Governor."

The aspirations of the ministers being different from those of the Governors, the ministers pulled towards democracy while the Governors pulled towards autocracy; the ministers desired to introduce a national colour in administration, while the Governors tried to eliminate it. Thus did Kelkar of CP comment : "I could not picture myself how a Governor could support my policy of non-interference with a Municipal Committee who wanted to hoist a national flag on the Municipal office and how the same Governor could ask me to uphold an order of a Deputy Commissioner who had suspended a Committee's resolution to the effect that its servants should put on Khaddar dress."<sup>1</sup>

The ministers appointed by the Governor were chosen by him according to his own whim, and according to the amount of loyalty that he could expect from them. These ministers did not represent any majority opinion among the elected members. They were rather ill-looked upon by them. The Swarajists, the largest party in most of the provincial assemblies, opposed and rather resisted their measures and none between the Congress and the League was prepared to extend his cooperation.

These ministers had rather often to work in two minds. On the one hand was the Governor who appointed them and therefore expected their loyalty, while on the other hand were their own countrymen who abused them for the same reason and who had to be satisfied by some substantial work which again was not easy as there was no complete cooperation either from the Services, from the Finance Department or from the Governor.

Not unoften, a minister turned completely oblivious of the public

1. *ibid.*, also Chintamani, *op. cit.*

opinion and of the aspirations of his countrymen. For if the Governor could appoint him, he could dismiss him as well, or keep him despite the opposition of the entire mass of the elected members. Therefore due to personal greed for power, it was more important to cultivate the satisfaction of the Governor than that of the members of the Legislature. And in such cases the minister would turn more reactionary than the Councillors.

Then, thanks to the communal electorates, the class electorates, the special electorates, etc., the Council itself represented only clashing interests and conflicting attitudes. The largest popular group was the Swarajists who would neither accept an office, nor support any government policy. Their only aim was to wreck the new Constitution, and this made the confusion worse confounded. It was no whit easy for the Ministers, or for that matter for the Councillors or even the Governor to work in such circumstances.

The Constitution of 1919 was rather a babe born under unlucky stars. The failure of monsoons in 1920 plunged the country into misery, while the Meston Award still insisted upon the provinces for its pound of flesh. There was thus a financial derangement which was going to tell very badly on the newly born Constitution. Added to this were the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the Khilafat Movement which made India anxious to see that the Constitution failed.

Little wonder, therefore, the people mocked at it and condemned it. Sir H. Butler explained : "In India it has almost become a term of abuse. I have heard one man shouting to another : "You are a dyarchy" (as if it signified a donkey). "I will beat you with a dyarchy," said one Indian boy to another and when questioned as to what dyarchy was, replied, "a new kind of tennis racket." I have been received in a Burma village by a dyarchy band braying against a Home Rule band with all the vigour of village faction, neither having the least idea of what Home Rule or dyarchy meant." About the Act in general L. Curtis writes : "The best that could be said of it was that after the most careful analysis of the situation they had failed to discover any less dangerous alternative."<sup>1</sup>

### Education

Yet another important development of the time of Chelmsford was in the field of education. Lord Chelmsford appointed Saddle Commission in 1917 to report on secondary, higher and university education under the Calcutta University alone. But the commission made a vast study not only of the Calcutta University, but of other Indian universities as well to institute a sort of comparison and formulate a sound policy for the Calcutta University's development.

1. Curtis, L., *Dyarchy*, p. xxv.

Its report submitted in 1919 was therefore comprehensive dealing with almost every aspect of secondary and higher education, and had a wide All India import.

The Commission recommended that (1) the university intermediate classes should be transferred to secondary schools, and that admission into the university should be at the existing intermediate examination stage. (2) The degree course duration after the intermediate examination should be three years. (3) The Board of Secondary Education should replace university in its control of secondary and intermediate education. (4) The Government should transfer the control of the Calcutta University from Centre to the provincial government. (5) The establishment of a university at Dacca should be hastened, and the mofussil colleges should be reorganised to concentrate higher education at a few important points which could in due time develop into university centres. (6) The organisation of university teaching service should be on a different basis from that of the government services. (7) A special board should be established to encourage the education of women. (8) The medium of instructions upto high school should be the vernaculars of the state, while English should be employed above that. (9) There should be a complete overhaul of the university examination system. (10) The development of the professional and vocational training such as medical, engineering, agricultural, law and teaching should be seriously taken up by the university.

The Government of India accepted these recommendations, though financial difficulties hindered the prospects of the Bill drafted for the purpose. The report was also recommended to the provincial governments for comments and action. Though retaining still the general policy on higher education in the hands of Centre, the Government of India Act 1919 transferred the charge of the Education Department into the hands of the Indian ministers responsible to the local legislatures. A university at Lucknow, and another at Dacca on the basis of unitary teaching was established in 1920. Allahabad got its university in 1921, while Delhi University was established in 1922.

A special note may here be added on primary education in the 20th century. The progress of this branch of education had not been satisfactory in the 19th century as mentioned above. And in the 5th quinquennial report covering the period of 1902-6, Mr Orange remarked that even if we assumed that there had been no increase in population, "at the rate of increase that had taken place in the last five years several generations would elapse before all the boys of school-age were in school." Anxiousness in this respect was expressed again by Gokhale in 1910, who proposed in the Imperial Legislature that a commission be appointed to plan a free and compulsory elementary education in this country. And next year he

brought in his Elementary Education Bill in which he made detailed calculations of the amount of money required for the purpose.

It was these efforts together with others which bore fruit, and Education now was elevated as referred to above to a principal charge for a member of the Viceroy's Council. And next, when H.I.M. George V visited India, in his Royal grants at the Delhi Durbar a pride place was given to the primary education which got Rs 50 lakhs with a promise to add to it yet further in the following years. Primary Education Acts were passed in Punjab, Bengal, Bombay, UP and Bihar and Orissa which came into effect between February 1918 and February 1919. And efforts were commenced in every province to make primary education for boys compulsory.

Among the difficulties which the Primary Education faced in India, the foremost of course was financial. Another difficulty was the supply of competent teachers. Thus for instance in UP, whereas the total supply of teachers from Training Classes was 1630 in 1917, and that from Normal Schools was 300, the total demand for vernacular schools was not less than 2,400. And yet another problem was to create such type of schools and curriculum for villages which should help the villagers the best in their private lives.

The general progress of education till 1919 may be judged from the following figures of expenditure in lakhs of rupees on different branches of the subject in public educational institutions in British India from all sources.

Year	1881-82	1891-92	1901-02	1911-12	1918-19
University education	18	33	46	87	159
Secondary	48	99	127	209	367
Primary	76	96	119	207	353
Special	9	17	23	54	84
Direction and Inspection	17	22	25	48	62
Buildings etc.	9	22	23	97	142
Scholarships	5	7	9	13	24
Miscellaneous	4	8	27	72	108
Total	186	304	399	787	1299

*The figures under the head 'Special' include expenditure on industrial and technical schools, commercial schools, schools of art and medical schools. While those under the head 'Buildings, etc.' include expenditure on all the different types of scholastic apparatuses, appliances, models, instruments, furnitures, etc.*

The above figures show how meagre was the amount of money expended on education. In fact there were many defects in the educational system which required to be removed, but which could not be removed due to the lack of finances. One of these defects was that only very few students stayed in schools to attain any real literacy. The Interim Education Report of the Statutory Commission said in the middle of the year 1928 : "Under present conditions of rural life, and with the lack of suitable vernacular literature, a child has very little chance of attaining literacy after leaving school; and indeed, even for the literates, there are many chances of relapse into illiteracy. The wastage in the case of girls is even more serious than in the case of boys." And then, there was too large a number of failures in the matriculation examination resulting into a great wastage of man-power. The universities continued to be the mere examining bodies, while colleges remained only a collection of lecture rooms. The institutions did not in any way train students in self-restraint and broad-mindedness. Nor did a proper type of element fitted for the highest education go into the universities. Nor was there an improvement in the aims and objects of the secondary as also of the higher education.

The female education remained backward, and the women remained still living in the middle age. So was the case with the Muslims. In 1871 their percentage in schools and colleges was only 14.5, while in 1917 it was not 23.5 which was the percentage of their population in India. In 1919, of the total number of students in Arts and Professional colleges which was 66,000, the number of the Muslim students was only 7,345, or  $\frac{1}{8}$  as against  $\frac{1}{2}$  of their population.

Then, for every type of advanced education foreign experts had to be imported, as India lacked its own facilities for the purpose. The Indian system was too slavish and imitative, and no effort was made to make it India-like. Education in high schools remained purely literary, there being no provision for practical training in industry, agriculture or trade and commerce. There were many other defects the further mention of which will make the catalogue too lengthy.

Still, however, certain achievements were made. The love of learning increased, and in their quest of knowledge an increasing number of Indian students went to Great Britain and other European countries. The number of students studying in Europe thus never went beyond 100 before 1880, but by 1921 their number increased as high as to 1,450. Not only the people of India grew more anxious to receive higher education, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians also now vied with each other to open educational institutions for the advance of their respective communities, which though harmful in one respect that communalism was thereby



encouraged, was beneficial in the other that the number of institutions multiplied.

And then, as Sir H. Horney Lovett wrote : "The system initiated in 1854 has produced a long line of excellent public servants, of writers and public men acquainted not only with the English Language but with English ideals and English methods; it has gone far to combat social evils and to develop the industrial and commercial resources in India."<sup>1</sup>

### THE THIRD AFGHAN WAR

During the First World War Russia fought on the side of Great Britain but soon a great revolution overtook her during which the outlying parts of the great Russian Empire together with Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara declared their independence. When the power of the Soviets was established these territories had to be reconquered, which process continued till Persia and Afganistan remained the only barriers between the Russian and the British territories in India. Efforts were made by the Bolshevik propaganda to foment troubles for the Indian Government on the north-west frontiers. Similar efforts to alienate Persia against the British failed but Afganistan had a different story to tell. The First World War was hardly over. After the British loss of a million killed and several million wounded, the soldiers now impatiently waited to go back home, when sudden developments in Afghanistan led the British to march 7,50,000 Indian troops accompanied by 4,50,000 animals into that country. The Third Afghan War had commenced.

There were causes which precipitated this clash. Apart from the Bolshevik propaganda which had its effect, there was a strong wave of nationalism which swayed the different countries of Asia and from which Afghanistan could not escape. The Afghans also wanted to free themselves from the British tutelage. The Afghan relations with the British at the time were governed by the political settlement which Lord Ripon had made with Amir Abdur Rehman Khan. Under this agreement the Afghan external relations had been subordinated to the British, in return for which Afghanistan got subsidies and concessions to import arms through India. Internally Afghanistan was free. This system established in 1880 continued for several decades although Abdur Rehman himself, and his successor Habibullah who came to power in 1901, were not happy. Repeated efforts were made by Afghanistan to enhance its status by having direct diplomatic contacts with the Court of St. James in London, although they never materialised. Habibullah asked Lord Chelmsford in 1916 for participation in the Peace Conference to which, however, he received no encouraging reply. In February 1919 he wrote to the Viceroy

1. Cambridge, *History of India*, VI, p. 356.

once again that he should be recognised at the Versailles Peace Treaty and demanded "Absolute liberty and freedom of administration and perpetual independence of Afganistan."<sup>1</sup> Chelmsford's reply to this demand was also evasive. But this at any rate was clear that the times had now changed. Already at the time of his accession Habibullah had proclaimed "that the Kingdom of Afghanistan should be internally and externally independent and free, i.e. to say, that all rights of government, that are possessed by other independent Powers of the world, should be possessed in their entirety by Afghanistan."<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan was determined to change its status.

The British humiliation in Afghanistan during the first two Afghan Wars was still a source of inspiration. Japan's victory over Russia in 1905 gave the Afghans confidence in their ability to fight against an European power like England. The incidents like the Russian occupation of Panjadesh in 1885 and the British failure to protect the Afghan interests were still remembered. Habibullah's diplomatic victory over Curzon, the grand reception that he received in 1907 from Lord Minto at Agra and Calcutta when King Edward himself greeted the Amir as "Your Majesty". All this encouraged the Afghan rulers to assert their independence.

Nor was the British advanced policy in the tribal territories touching the Durand line to the liking of the Afghans. Lord Curzon's conversion of the north-west frontier areas into a separate province, establishment of the British posts at places like Miranshah in the Tochi Valley and in Chitral and elsewhere, their raising of the tribal levies such as Khyber Rifles, Mohmand Militia, Tochi Scouts, Qurram Militia; all these aroused the Afghan's fears that the ultimate British aim was to absorb all the territories lying within their sphere of influence, as Russia had done on her own side of the dividing line.

The Pan-Islamist Movement which was purely Islamic in character also had its effect in Afghanistan. The source of inspiration for the Movement was the basic sympathy of the Muslim world for Turkey, the "sick-man of Europe", was tottering to its death. The European powers like Russia and England tried to draw territorial benefits from the situation. The attitude of neutrality which England exhibited during the Turko-Italian and Balkan wars of 1911-13 was not liked by the Muslims, who wished the British to have shown an active sympathy for the Turkish Sultan. The unsympathetic speech of the British Prime Minister Asquith in 1912 with regard to Turkey also affected the situation. During the First World War Turkey joined the hostile camp. This also developed the Muslim antagonism against the British. A hostile propaganda was started against them

1. Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, London, 1967, p. 268.

2. Quoted, Prasad, Bisheshwar, *Our Foreign Policy Legacy*, New Delhi, 1965, p. 45.

all over the Middle East. Indian Muslims like Zafar Ali Khan and Ali brothers helped by the great Indian leader Mr Gandhi, organised the Khilafat Movement to support the cause of Turkey. The Muslims in the north-west frontier areas and Afghanistan were affected by such movements and this also helped hostilities against the British.

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Another factor which precipitated the clash was the spread of the Ghadar activities of the Indians in this part of the world. The Indian leaders like Raja Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah won sympathies of the Germans and with their help established a Provisional Indian Government under their joint presidentship at Kabul. This influenced the Afghan minds. Many Afghans of note and even some members of the Royal family sympathised with this Provisional Government, the ground of friendship between the two being their common hatred against the British. In October 1915, after the war had been declared, a Turko-German mission arrived at Kabul in a bid to sever Afghan connections with the British. The members of the Provisional Indian Government gave every help to this mission. Although Habibullah himself did not agree to break with the Government of India, still he entered into an agreement with the mission in which he was recognised as the Head of a sovereign and independent State. Another effect was that the Mission produced some progressive and influential Afghans like Nasrullah Khan, the Amir's own brother, Amanullah Khan, his third son, Ulya Hazrat, Amanullah's mother, and Nadir Khan, the Afghan Commander-in-Chief, and organised them into a 'War Party' which actively sympathised with Turkey and wanted the Amir also to join them. When the Amir did not agree, the 'War Party' went underground.

In the meanwhile the active Mullah propaganda to develop sympathy for Turkey continued not only in Afghanistan but also in the neighbouring lands. Seistan and south-east Persia were affected. Mohmands on India's north-west frontiers were aroused, Marri Baluch tribe revolted against the British. Disaffection developed and this vitiated the whole atmosphere. An uneasy calm prevailed in Afghanistan, the paper-thin surface of which suddenly broke on 19 February 1919 when Amir Habibullah who had gone on a shooting trip was suddenly murdered at Jallalabad. Habibullah's eldest son, Inayatullah Khan, his brother Nasarullah Khan and his Commander-in-Chief Nadir Khan were in the hunting party. As soon as this murder took place, Nasarullah proclaimed himself Amir and forced Inayatullah Khan also to recognise his authority. Obviously the 'War Party' was at the back of this murder. The troops at Jallalabad loyal to Habibullah arrested their Commander-in-Chief. Nasarullah Khan also had to bow before them. He stepped down and Habibullah's third son, Amanullah Khan, Governor of the Kabul city was recognised as the new ruler. Amanullah Khan himself was, however, suspected of a part in this treachery. In order to appease the troops he

enhanced their way and removed Nadir Khan to a remote garrison at Khost, but order still could not be restored. It is in these circumstances that Amanullah openly turned for help to the 'War Party', made a pact with it and supported by the Provisional Indian Government started planning an invasion of India. Molesworth writes : "It seems he believed exaggerated reports of internal trouble in India and the withdrawal of many British troops. He may have hoped, in the event of a successful campaign into a country torn by rebellion, to recover Peshawar and areas in the Derajat upto the river Indus...He had no military administrative knowledge or ability but was extremely impulsive, unbalanced and untrustworthy."<sup>1</sup>

As Amanullah prepared for war, efforts were made through the Provisional Government to contact Indian leaders like Tilak and Gandhi. Insurrections were planned in the Punjab. In April 1919, the uprisings actually took place at several places like Lahore, Chhaharta, Gurdaspur and Amritsar. Violence was committed on the Bombay-Delhi-Peshawar Railway. The aim was that as the Afghans invaded India, disturbances within the country would paralyse order and make the Afghan success easy. On 4 May 1919 the new Afghan Commander-in-Chief, Saleh Muhammad, marched his troops and village Bagh on the British side of the frontier was occupied. The Afghan soldiers amassed themselves at the western end of Khyber. The water-supply at Landi Kotel was cut off. The Indian staff at the pumping station was done to death. Large number of tribesmen on the British side of the frontier collected at Jallalabad and rifles were distributed among them. Holy war against the British was proclaimed.

On 6 May "War was declared on Afghanistan. The Third Afghan War had begun. This war, however, was different from the two previous ones. In 1839 and 1879, the British fought offensive campaigns, with the object of forestalling Russian penetration into Afghanistan. In 1919 the 'Russian Bogey' had faded into the background, at any rate for a time. Thus the campaign was a defensive-offensive for, in any form of fighting, offence is always the best means of defence."<sup>2</sup>

Of the most important battles two were fought at Bagh. In the first battle of Bagh the British could not secure much success but the second battle of Bagh ended in their favour, the British having suffered 10 killed and 89 wounded against the Afghan losses unknown. General Molesworth who participated in the war relates an amusing incident which took place during the second battle : "A runner lying down close to me was suddenly hit, apparently through the head. His helmet had been knocked off and his head seemed to be pulp of

1. Molesworth, Lt. Gen. G.N., *Afghanistan, 1919*, 1962, p. 23.

2. *ibid.*, p. 27.

blood and brains. To my astonishment he rose to his knees. He was quite unhurt! Our bully beef rations were issued in 6-lb tins—one to each section and this had to be carried by one man. This runner had put his on the top of his haversack and carried high upon his back. The bullet had gone through his helmet, into the tin, and covered his head with bully beef. There was hilarity as he clawed the stuff out of his hair and it was a long time before he got away from the joke about his 'wound'. The men of his section who had lost their meat ration were not so amused."<sup>1</sup>

### The Peace Treaty

Another battle fought at Dakka across the river Kabul cost the British 22 killed and 157 wounded; the Afghan casualties being 600 which included 200 killed. Kabul was bombarded on 24 May by a Handley-Page aeroplane, which caused much alarm. The ladies of the royal harem were said to have been so overcome with terror "that they rushed out into the streets. This was the most scandalous episode the capital had enjoyed for many years."<sup>2</sup> The Afghan back was soon broken and they sued for peace. On 8 August 1919 the peace treaty was concluded. The Afghans got what they had desired. The British delegation which had gone to negotiate peace handed a note to his Afghan counterpart which said: "The Treaty of Peace now offered contains nothing that interferes with the complete liberty of Afghanistan in external or internal matters."<sup>3</sup> As a result of this treaty the British renounced their responsibility of defending the Afghan dominions. Subsidy was not to be paid to the Amir any more. He was, however, permitted to import arms and ammunition through India. Reciprocal missions for the two parties were provided for. Afghans are said to have received a severe handling but as it is obvious from the terms of the treaty *status quo* was not re-established as Molesworth believes. Sardar Ali Ahmad, the chief Afghan peace delegate was probably nearer the truth when he announced before a public gathering at Jallalabad on 12 August that "Afghanistan had won the war and that the British would evacuate Dakka and pay compensation for all the damages they had done!"<sup>4</sup> All the territories occupied by the British were evacuated and peace was restored.

### The Effects of the War

The British north-west frontier however, was thoroughly disturbed and it took several years to restore order. Almost all the tribal levies raised under the new policy initiated by Curzon instead of standing by the British in this time of trial got disaffected. Many

1. *Ibid.*
2. Swinson, Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 277.
3. Quoted, Prasad, B., p. 46.
4. See, Molesworth, pp. 93, 95.

took the first opportunity to desert them and instead of being a source of strength became a liability so long as the war continued. This happened with the Khyber Rifles. Malik Yar Mohammed, leader of the Malik Din Khal Afridis actively fomented trouble among the tribesmen. There was an uprising among the Tochi Waziris, which affected the North Waziristan militia as well. There was a disaffection among the South Waziristan militia as a result of which the British decided to evacuate the militia posts at places like Wana. Even while evacuating British officers the loyal militia men were attacked. This happened at Wana itself and the British suffered losses due to this reason as well. Costly expeditions had to be sent by the British to restore order in Waziristan during 1921-22. In fact the north-west frontier tribes had been so much aroused by the Afghan agents against the British that the peace of 8 August came to them as a shock. The tribal chiefs approached the Amir who made fun of them that they had not sufficiently taken their opportunity to pillage and loot. However he hinted that a war would soon be declared against the British once again and they should make ready to take advantage.

What is clear from what happened on the frontier during the war is that Lord Curzon's frontier policy failed under the first test that was applied to it. Sir Kerr Fraser Titler, who had a sufficient experience of working on the frontiers and who in 1935 became British Minister to Afghanistan said : "I cannot help feeling some doubt whether Curzon ever really appreciated the fundamental issues of the whole frontier question. His policy certainly did not put an end to the punitive expeditions, nor did it protect the settled districts from trans-border raiders....the Curzon policy advanced our relations with the tribes not one whit, and broke down altogether under the strain of Third Afghan War, when British control of the trans-frontier area vanished in a few days at the approach of an Afghan force."<sup>1</sup>

The Third Afghan War was the last important event in the Anglo-Afghan relations. It may not therefore be out of place to pen down a few words to complete the story of these relations down to the year of India's independence. The Peace Treaty of August 1919 gave Afghanistan a new status. It amounted, in fact, to a frank recognition by the British of the new forces of nationalism which were emerging all over Asia after the First World War. The British realised that the old policy of having subsidised states around India's borders was no more practicable. As soon as Amanullah was free of the British tutelage he started developing friendly contacts with

1. Quoted, Swinson, Arthur. p. 262.



the other European nations. Archaeologists, scientists and technicians were invited from Italy, France and Germany to help develop the Afghan resources. A friendly treaty was signed with the Soviet Union by which Amanullah got gifts of arms and several other advantages. Later on some differences developed between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union leading even to a collision between the two at Urtatagai in 1925. Peace, however, was soon restored and a non-aggression pact was signed between the two countries. During this period although the British recognised the Afghan freedom of action, still they sometimes got anxious as a result of the new zeal with which Soviet Union established her new completely controlled republics in Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan; more particularly when the Amir of Bokhara was expelled to take refuge in Kabul. They, however, calmed their feelings and made absolutely no interference in the Afghan internal and external policy. Amanullah continued with his policy of westernisation of Afghanistan. The Western system of education, the Western mode of life and the Western practices of administration, all began to be aped, but the fanatic Afghans were not prepared to go too far with him on this. Amanullah's efforts of modernisation began to be considered as a naked interference into the religious beliefs of the people. They soon rose into a rebellion and he had to escape from his country to take refuge in Italy. Nadir Khan, his Commander-in-Chief took over and established a new dynasty. The British, France, Germany and several other European nations immediately recognised Nadir Khan and peace on the Aglo-Afghan borders continued even during the time of his successors, so much so that when the Second World War commenced, cooperation of Afghanistan in resisting any foreign invasion was taken for granted. The new policy which had emerged from the Peace Treaty of 1919 was summed up by Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India in 1940, thus : "A strong, stable, and friendly Afghan administration has always been a British interest, and never more so than perhaps it is today and if in the past we sought to secure our interests by a measure of control over and by granting subsidies to the Government of that country, we have now recognised the advantages of securing them through the agency of a stable, friendly and independent kingdom; for we are satisfied that the friendship of an independent sovereign state is a surer foundation on which to rest our common interests than a State subject to an uneasy subserviency, irksome to the freedom-loving spirit of the Afghan people. That there is a powerful bond of common interests between India and Afghanistan must be apparent to anyone who considers the geographical, the political, and the economic circumstances of the two countries."<sup>1</sup>

1. Prasad, B., pp. 48-49.



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